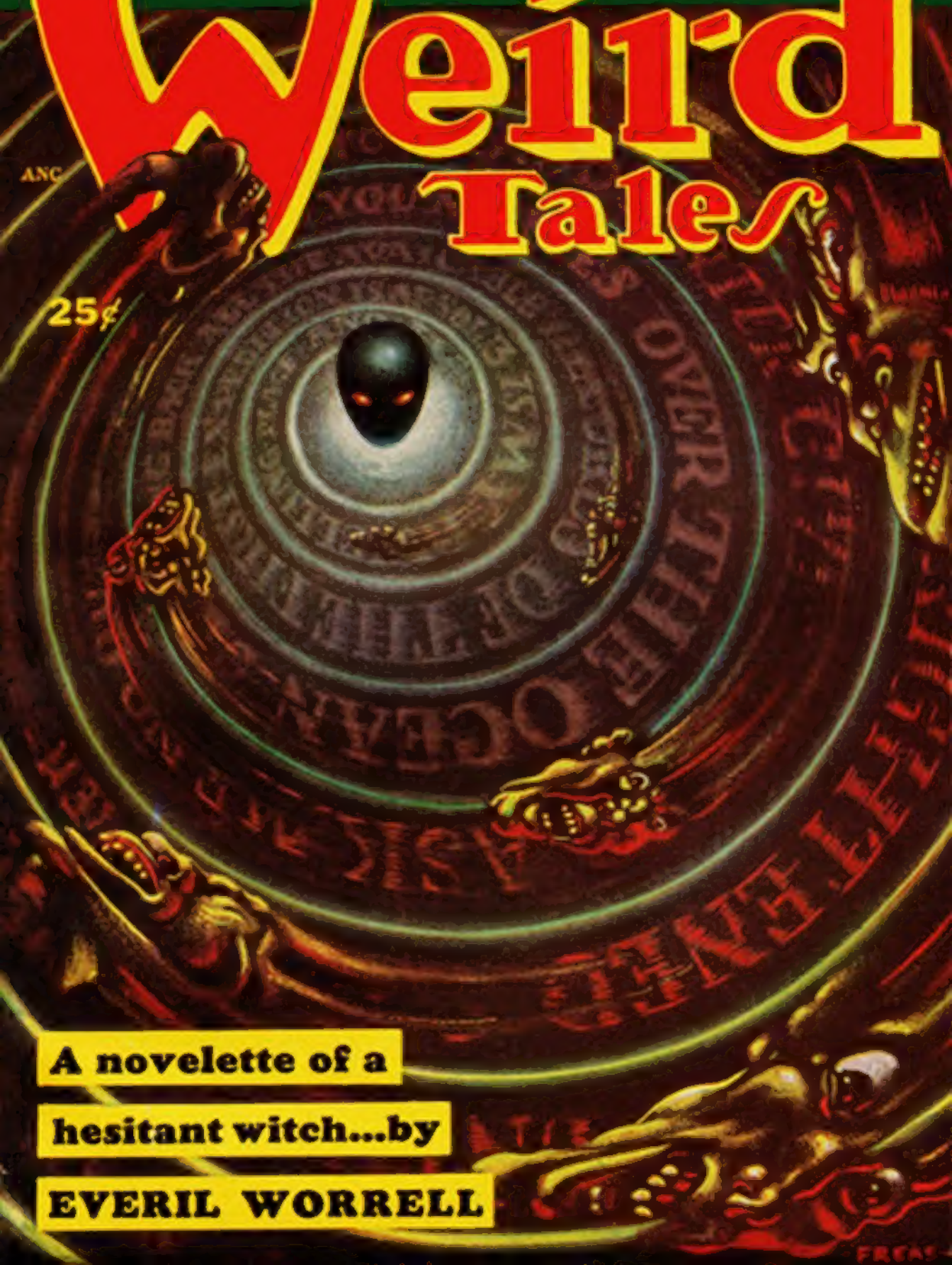
JANUARY

Weird Tales

25¢



A novelette of a hesitant witch...by EVERIL WORRELL

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Without obligation rush to me full details *in plain envelope* together with the FREE Loan Application and Loan Papers for my signature, if I decide to borrow.

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Occupation..... Age.....
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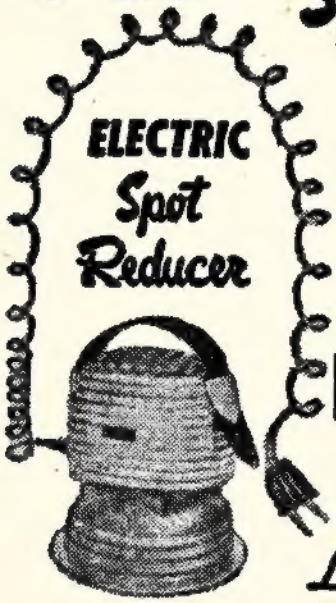

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LOSE WEIGHT OR NO CHARGE

JANUARY, 1953 Cover by Frank Kelly Freas

THE EYRIE 6

ONCE THERE WAS A LITTLE GIRL (A Novelette) . . . . Everil Worrell 10
You remember the rest of it—when she was bad she was horrid. How horrid is witchcraft?

THE PHANTOM SOLDIER AT TICONDEROGA . . . . Dr. Cyrus Macmillan 31
From Inverawe, in the West Highlands, a ghostly avenger followed the British troops to the new world.

I CAN'T WEAR WHITE . . . . . Suzanne Pickett 34
"I drove her home; but when I went around the car to open the door for her to get out—she wasn't there!

THE GLOVES . . . . . Garnett Radcliffe 39
The first incident about the gloves was of a very trivial nature; the others were a very different matter. . . .

THE WEREWOLF OF PONKERT (A novelette) . . . . . H. Warner Munn 43
. . . between man and wild beast there can be no compromise.

(Copyright 1925 Popular Fiction Publishing Company)

WET STRAW . . . . . Richard Matheson 62
". . . if I die, you'll wait and I'll find a way to come to you."

RED GHOSTS IN KENTUCKY (Verse) . . . . . Leah Bodine Drake 66

"SEXTON, SEXTON, IN THE WALL" . . . . . August Derleth 68
". . . Sexton, Sexton in the wall, when we die put down us all."

SIX FEET OF WILLOW GREEN . . . . . Carroll F. Michener 75
Ssu Yin felt he owed the white man two lives—his own and that of the woman whose soul was now inhabited by the six feet of willow green that was his precious serpent.

(Copyright 1923 by Rural Publishing Company)

HAND OF DEATH . . . . . Marjorie Murch Stanley 81
The theory that anyone could use an extra arm might sound humorous; it could breed horror upon horror.

Published bi-monthly by WEIRD TALES, 9 Rockefeller Plaza, New York 20, N. Y. Reentered as second-class matter January 26, 1940, at the Post Office at New York, N. Y., under the Act of March 3, 1879. Single copies, 25 cents. *Subscription rates:* One year in the United States and possessions, $1.50. Foreign and Canadian postage extra. The publishers are not responsible for the loss of unsolicited manuscripts although every care will be taken of such material while in their possession.

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PRINTED IN THE U. S. A. Vol. 44, No. 3

D. McILWRAITH, *Editor*

Tired of the same old job?

Sure, you are. Anybody gets tired of standing still in the same place. But don't get the idea that just quitting your present job and going somewhere else will take you out of the rut.

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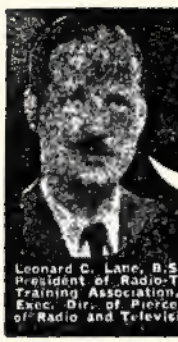

Leonard C. Lane, B.S., M.A.
President of Radio-Television Training Association, Exec. Dir. of Pierce School of Radio and Television

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Yes, I pay your way to New York and return from wherever you live in the U. S. or Canada, after you finish your home study course. I give you two *free* weeks—50 hours of advanced instruction and shop training at the *Pierce School of Radio & Television*. You use modern electronics equipment, including student-operated TV and Radio stations. You go behind the scenes of New York's big Radio-TV centers—to study first hand. And I give you all this AT NO EXTRA COST! (Applies to complete Radio-TV course only.)

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VETERANS! If qualified under G.I. Bill, check here ☐

The Editor, WEIRD TALES
9 Rockefeller Plaza, New York 20, N. Y.

I have read WEIRD TALES *for years, and with the recent issues have felt more and more like congratulating you on the stories you're printing. Like some of your other readers, I think, I was getting a little tired of the same old horror tales. Lately the fresh, novel ideas in some of the stories—in general, in fact—are a new incentive to reading my favorite fiction.*

Best of luck to you, and I'll hope to be enjoying WEIRD TALES *for another thirty or forty years.*

Sincerely,
Louise Behrens

The Editor, WEIRD TALES
9 Rockefeller Plaza, New York 20, N. Y.

The November issue of W. T. is the first one I've bought. Are trimmed edges a regular feature?

Say. Will some of you fans who've been reading W. T. since its origination or thereabouts, please write to me and give a short history of the magazine? Please!

Lee Huddleston
Baird, Texas

The Editor, WEIRD TALES
9 Rockefeller Plaza, New York 20, N. Y.

I have found a real "honest-to-goodness" witchcraft word. It doesn't matter where or how I found it, and I am sending it on to our readers. The word is hemlock, *and it is the word for sleep.*

If you have insomnia, just lie down on your bed and say "hemlock" three or four times, and you will have no trouble going to sleep. It gives you the very same feeling you experience when you swallow a sleeping tablet, and then you go immediately to sleep.

Sometimes, if I say the word nine or ten times—though, I don't guarantee this will work with everyone (it doesn't with Mother, it just puts her to sleep) it will create weird mental pictures, before falling asleep, all of woodland scenes; gloomy paths over-grown with moss, waterfalls, and sunlit vistas reaching away into infinite distances—beautiful almost beyond imagination.

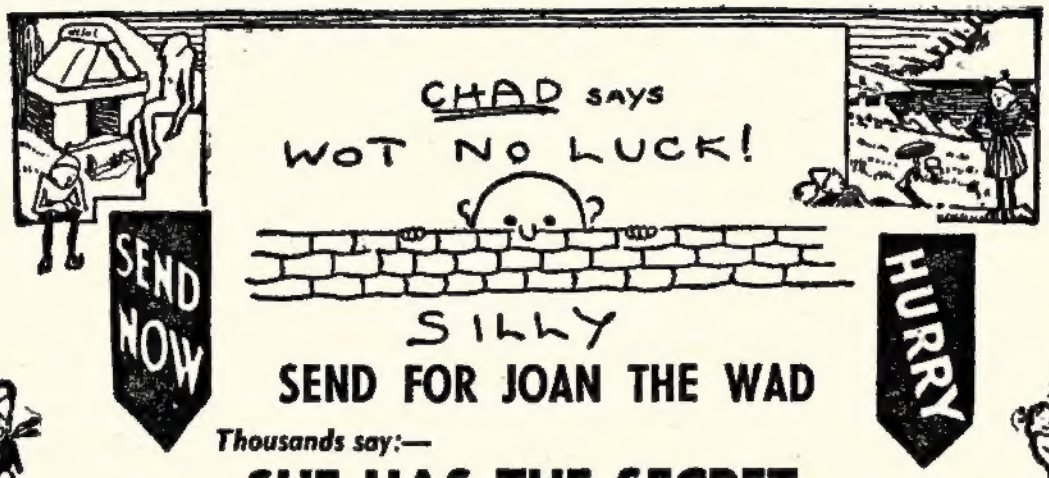
Then when I fall asleep—and this seems to be true with everyone—I have weird unusual dreams. Sometimes frightening dreams.

I wish WEIRD TALES *would publish some witchcraft words. If any of our readers know any, I wish they would please send them to your magazine, or to me, individually. Witchcraft words mean power, and I could use some power, if I possessed it.*

I look forward eagerly to your magazine, and wish it came out every month!

Maude C. Parker
Keyser, W. Va.

We print this letter, but by no means guarantee Miss Parker's prescription for sleep. An idea of quite another sort, indeed, occurred to us. The vast hemlock forests of the North furnish a great deal of the pulpwood that makes paper for countless "pulp" magazines. We hope that the fiction published on our pages, for instance, which al-



SEND FOR JOAN THE WAD

Thousands say:—

SHE HAS THE SECRET

In several million booklets you may have read extracts from testimonials received from as far back as 1930. We just take them at random. We posses more than twelve thousand unsolicited testimonials, and we know from chance remarks that many who swear by Joan, never trouble to report to us. Having so many we can't possibly publish them all, nor can we constantly be changing our advertisements, and we have been content to keep to those originally published, but such is the immense interest being displayed we thought we would depart from our rule in a small measure and just publish 3 or 4 of the huge number that have come in recently. Remember, similar testimonials have been coming in unceasingly since 1930.

NEVER WITHOUT MONEY

"I received one of your Histories about three weeks ago, and it has brought me luck. Before I received your book I was always without money, but now, thanks to you, I am never without money." (Mrs.) G. O., Glos.

LOST HIS JOAN—LOST HIS LUCK

"Please let me know how much to send for 'Joan the Wad' and 'Jack O'Lantern.' I had them both in 1931, but somehow lost them in hospital two years ago. I can honestly say that since losing them nothing has seemed to go right with me. I know what good luck Joan can bring by honest facts I have really experienced . . . I certainly know that 'Joan the Wad' is more than a lucky charm." Mr. E. S. S., Liphook, Hants.

MARRIED A MILLIONAIRE

". . . Two of my friends have won £500 each since receiving your mascots, and another has married an American millionaire . . . Please forward me one 'Joan the Wad' and one 'Jack O'Lantern'." C. E., Levenshulme.

BETTER JOB, MORE MONEY, LESS HOURS, IMPROVED HEALTH

"My dear Joan . . . She has brought me continual good luck and her influence spreads to every sphere . . . I have got a much better job . . . greater wages . . . less working hours . . . and my health has greatly improved. I have always been a lonely kind of person, but . . . a friend of the opposite sex, she is also lonely . . . great opportunity for comradeship offered. So you see how the influence of Joan works. My pockets have always been full and I have had many wishes and desires fulfilled . . . I would not part with Joan for her weight in gold, she is much too valuable in every way. Her powers extend all over the world, and she works unceasingly for the full benefit of her friends and adherents. She rides in my pocket day and night and never leaves me." D. H. Leeds, 9.

Just send Two Dollar notes or an International Money Order and a large self-addressed envelope to:

JOAN'S COTTAGE 3, LANIVET, BODMIN, CORNWALL, ENG.

and I will send you both History and Mascot.

though based on actual hemlock will tend to keep our readers awake, not induce sleep!

—Editor, WEIRD TALES

"

The Editor, WEIRD TALES
9 Rockefeller Plaza, New York 20, N. Y.

. . . the stories published in WEIRD TALES *should enable the readers to separate black and white magic. Keep up the good work!*

John W. Robinson
Westmount, P. Q., Canada

Maybe that's where some of the hemlock pulp comes in.

—Editor, WEIRD TALES

The Editor, WEIRD TALES
9 Rockefeller Plaza, New York 20, N. Y.

With your kind indulgence and permission, I should like to defend what Mr. Wade was pleased to call my "misleading and opinionated matter" in my letter (Sept. '52 WEIRD TALES) contra, *as Mr. Wade says, the late and quite possibly great H. P. Lovecraft.*

In such a rejoinder, one runs the risk of saying nothing more than one said the first time, and I trust that I shall escape this particular pitfall.

In the first place, Mr. Wade, in admitting that Mr. Lovecraft's prose was "complex and dense," with which I would be the last to quarrel, equates these terms with my "affected, turgid, and labored." If Mr. Wade has a dictionary at hand, which the general literary excellence of his letter would lead me to assume, he will very soon discover that to say that style is "affected, turgid, and labored," is not *at all to say that it is complex and dense. One may be affected, turgid —which means bombastic or pompous—and labored, which means forced, not easy or natural, without being either complex or dense, although Lovecraft was certainly both.*

The reverse is equally true. The style of the late Nathan Cardozo was somewhat complex, syntactically, but it was certainly not turgid, labored, nor affected; it was natural to him, and was a joy to behold.

I will stick by the requirements of reticence and detachment. You are not going to scare me by beating me over the head with "eldritch" adjectives, or by telling me that Yog Shoggoth and his pals are the most awful, the most horrendous, the most damnable things on the face of the earth, or off it. If you can't convey your idea otherwise, it is not at all worth conveying.

When Lovecraft was good, he was very, very good. I have never denied that he was. But when he was very, very good, as a general rule, he was writing more traditional stories: "In the Vault," for example, as others, better critics than I, have observed before me. Incidentally, that particular tale is very close to a "true ghost story," and so, in a lesser way, is "The Terrible Old Man."

Well, undoubtedly Mr. Wade is of the same opinion still. De gustibus. *And, incidentally, I thall continue to read W. T., despite the opinion of another of your letter writers that I have no business doing so.*

Joseph V. Wilcox
Albion, Michigan

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(*Continued on page* 74)

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B. M. Eberle

Once there was a Little Girl...

by Everil Worrell

In other days it was said, "Thou Shalt Not Suffer a Witch to Live!"

JENNIFER was certain that no one in the Super-Sensory Research Society Could have guessed she had spent the afternoon on a psychiatrist's couch. She leaned across the corner of the long baize-covered table, and watched the fall of the dice and listened to the calling of numbers. Her hair was like shiny blue-black smoke that showed red glints; it fell shoulder length, with smooth bangs and one refractory little curl like a forelock; her eyes were deep wells, and her skin like peachblow in spring. All this she knew, and how the blue and green of her sequined evening gown set it off, and she thought pleasurably of these things from time to time, seeing a picture image of herself in each pair of masculine eyes.

Yet it was in part because she looked as she did, that she had been forced to go to a psychiatrist. Milt was keeping score of the way the numbers were called and the

Heading by Joseph Eberle

way the dice fell, and how darkly dominant and commanding he looked, doing it! Yet it was only last week that he had threatened to kill himself if she did not marry him, and before him there had been Chester Downing, and before him Alan Kerry. Chester had had a crazy accident with his car the night she refused him, and Alan had done nothing but drink for months. Something in her exerted a magnetism beyond what seemed normal or right; beyond the warrant of gleaming hair, sweet mouth and child's eyes that she knew were hers.

So she had felt that something must be wrong about her, and she had all but stopped sleeping, and finally she had gone to the psychiatrist.

"None of you make scores like the Rhine reports!" Milt complained. "Some of you try who haven't had a turn."

Milt had dragged Jennifer here. She wasn't much interested in these queer little cards with crosses, waves, circles and stars on them, but if she could make him happy in little things, perhaps he would meet another girl, with a heart more easily won.

STRANGE, the effect of today's visit to the psychiatrist! She had remembered half-forgotten things, all right. But afterward, they weren't "purged"—was that the term? They had come away with her, they were here with her, all the old memories.

She was more afraid, more guilt-complexed, not less. Afraid of herself, of Jennifer. Afraid of Jennifer's beauty. How silly it sounded, for a girl to be as conceited as all that! What was it about her, that was different? What was it, that was Jennifer's fault?

"*You* try, Jennifer!" Milt demanded. "I'll throw the dice, and you try to read it telepathically. I gave one glance at it to the five around this end, shielding it from you, then I cover it, see, and we all concentrate. You try to guess the number facing up."

Jennifer did as he asked. He threw a three, and she called a five; he threw a six, and she called one. It went on that way for a quarter of an hour; Milt liked doing it with Jennifer, but it didn't work. Not even one time did it work; it was as though she resisted reading Milt's mind, didn't want to and wouldn't. She didn't even score her law of averages quota.

But now she could excuse herself. She could say she was tired and wanted a little air, would step out on the balcony. Oh, no thank you, just alone, please.

On the balcony she gave herself over to remembering: quickly remembering things that took so long in passing.

ON THE balcony, Jennifer blinked back tears.

Not only was she remembering, she was afraid again. Tears were no good. They held back the magic. She had tried to forget the magic; yet it had been her friend, and tonight she knew she needed it again.

The sky was moonlit and cloud-wracked, and shadows dimmed the sequins of her dress. Once she had given up the green her childhood cherished. Witches wore green in the old days, Maria had said. It hadn't meant much until she read the Book, and then for years Jennifer would wear no green. When she began the forgetting—the not thinking back rememberingly, that is, for of course she had not really forgotten at all—she had laughed at herself a little, and restored the loved color to some extent. When she wore green she wore something blue also. Then she was wearing nature's colors, and the blue of the sky, whether day sky or night sky, was a blessed color. It was just a color habit, now. The moon came clear of the cloud wrack, and blue and green, the sequins were stars—but the green ones winked more brightly, and with more varied hues. They held the color of the old swamp meadow.

The clouds came over again and a light rain fell, bringing its fresh, damp smell to the summer night. But Jennifer did not feel the rain. It fell all around her, and the concrete of the balcony floor darkened with the moisture—except in a neat little circle right around Jennifer. That hadn't happened since ever so long ago. Long ago, when once there was a little girl who climbed out through her window at night, and ran off down the old woods road.

The first time, she had been asleep in bed, just like any night. How old was she then? Probably about five; well, five or six.

She slept soundly and dreamed little and lightly. She couldn't remember any nightmares having bothered her. On that night in the middle of summer, Jennifer awoke.

The night was still, and crickets were calling. (They were calling now; the rain had stopped, and their voices had come to life over there in the wooded city park.)

The child Jennifer had lain still, quiet and listening and very wide awake.

And then the dreadful thing happened.

She was not alone in her room. Men were walking, one behind the other, wearing a queer kind of armor; she knew it for armor, although it was surely a year later that someone gave her a book of historical stories written for children, having pictures of armor like that. These men carried swords and spears, and they had come—Oh, she knew it!—to take her. To take her, and kill her. She knew, even, the reason for this. She had things that made her the person she was, and these things were to be wrested from her. She owned—lands; and a castle. She had a name which made them hers. A princess? It might be, or it might not, but it was an important name, a title.

To get rid of her, someone had accused her of something—she did not know what. And the someone had sent these armed men to take her—

A scream welled up in her young throat, and she choked it back. The men were there, but not quite. They seemed not to see her, not quite to have found her. If she slipped away at once and very quietly?

The window was open; the screen slipped up easily. Jennifer was on the sill, and over it, and running down the walk to the dusty Iowa road, and then down the road. By the time she had climbed the snake fence, she was a part of the free, sweet night of summer, both owning it and belonging to it. She ran across a dewy meadow, and when she was among tall trees, the ground sloped sharply downward. It became damp and the moonlight and starlight sifted through heavy foliage; she was near the edge of a marsh-rimmed pool, and frogs croaked a welcome.

SHE sat down, cross-legged in her white night dress, on a lichened fallen tree, and looked at the dark water. Patches of the sky were in it; rings formed and widened where water things moved: a fish jumping, some kind of waterbugs travelling even though it was night time.

She felt herself give something of herself to the night and the night things, not just for now, but for good and all; she felt herself take something of their mysterious other kinds of lives into her. She found with her eyes the old bullfrog she had first found with her ears, saw the shine of his jewelled eyes in the glinting light of the water that mirrored little bits of sky between branch shadows stooping over. She was not sure, for a dizzy moment, whether she was Jennifer, or a little green frog living at home in the safe, still water.

The moon swung clear of the tree-tops, and shone up at her from the shining pool, and she knew that time had passed and she ought to go home; she was reluctant, but she was not afraid to go back.

The queer moment, the one time and place folding over on another time and place had passed over with the earth's turning. The men in armor who had not quite found her in her room would be gone to some far place where they belonged, from which it might be they could never come again. It would be safe to go back. And moreover, she was, in some strange way reinforced. A bigger, stronger Jennifer though still a little girl.

But she thought, wishing it in some determined, forceful way that was now to her wishing, if only she might have something of this night to keep with her! A friend, to be close to her, dear to her—not a person, but something that loved to be out in the dark, and to move and be free in it.

She looked behind her in the dewy meadow, seeking for a thing she might take home, thinking doubtfully of the frogs in the pool in swamp hollow. You couldn't take a frog for a friend, for a pet. *That* wouldn't do—

Then she saw it, walking softly after her through the tall meadow grass. A little cat a lovely, half-grown kitten, so darkly blue grey-maltese in color as to be almost black —but not quite; with green, green eyes that shone like phosphorus on a wet log!

She waited, and it came up confidently

to her. A wild, woods kitten! Barn cats ran off like that into the woods; they were always unapproachable. This one wasn't. It rubbed against her bare legs, purring. Oh, it had the sweetest purr!

Jennifer lifted it in her arms and carried it lovingly and tenderly home.

In the morning her mother found them asleep in bed together.

"Why did you push the screen up, Jennifer?" she half scolded. "It's a darling kitten, and as tame as can be; but the house might have been full of moths. Yes, darling, you can keep it, of course. You can't sleep with it, however. We'll have to think about giving it a name—"

"Midnight!" Jennifer said, as though she had had time to think about it. "Her name is Midnight."

"Well, it's not quite a *black* cat; but it certainly did prowl in the night!" her mother said.

But when they told Maisie, she crossed herself in the way she had done more often when she first came to the States from Jamaica (and Jennifer could just remember that time, less than three years before.)

"Midnight!" the neat Negro woman said, showing the whites of her eyes a little. "Mistress, it was that in the Book."

"Which I don't want to hear any more about. Which is a piece of old foolishness that has been burned up, and is going to be forgotten!" Jennifer's mother said severely.

Jennifer was only mildly curious.

MIDNIGHT slept in Jennifer's room. Sometime in the deep-night hours, the cat would spring softly to the child's bed, soft-pawing back to the rug in the first dawnlight. This was a secret between the girl and the cat.

There were other secrets. The night journeys down the dusty road and across the meadow, through the wood to the swampy land and the round pool where the frogs lived. These were secrets. Jennifer's dreams became vivid and colorful, and she told these to her cat, Midnight and they were secret between them, too.

She was not sure whether she had dreamed, when once again she saw the armed men she had seen walking on that first night of her discovery of the night world of out-of-doors. The vision was not terrifying. Jennifer was conscious that she was an onlooker, seeing a real happening and yet separated completely from it. In the beginning, she saw herself sitting at the margin of the pool in the forest, and Midnight walked softly, rubbing against her there, as on so many nights.

A picture formed before her eyes in the pool, and she looked at herself; an older Jennifer, wearing clothing she had never seen—a queer kind of nightdress, for she was in bed, sitting up and staring before her wide eyes, into an unfamiliar room.

The room was superimposed upon her room at home. It was like looking at something far away, like looking through the wrong end of her father's field glasses when they were out of focus. A flaring torch set in a wall sconce brightened the little picture scene, and the other room—not the one Jennifer knew well—blotted out the room that was really hers, and the picture-image was in focus.

The men-at-arms marched in, with their heavy swords and spears. Their faces were brutal. But there were two others more richly dressed, and these were new and had not been of the frightening procession from which Jennifer had run away.

They seemed to whisper together; then their voices came clear, though somehow small and far away like their faces and figures:

"Gerald. *Is* your cousin a witch?"

The one who spoke was of average height, with reddish hair and a face which looked as though it laughed easily and often, but not gaily or kindly. The one who answered was taller and quite dark, and his eyebrows met right across the top of his nose, and the straight, dark line of them was somehow very cruel looking.

"Of course she's not a witch. Witches don't run in our family. But if she were one, her estates would come to me. And if I denounce her, my name still is clear, and still her estates come to me. Were she a witch, I might fear to do this to her. You have some mind for legal matters, Morland. Help me with this, when the case is tried.

You'll note the points. Her cat is here, ever with her; not a black cat, but dark enough to be called so. She calls it, kindly to our purpose—"

The voice broke off, because the girl in the canopied bed seemed to emerge from a frozen terror, and screamed once, sharply. The men-at-arms wavered doubtfully; and the girl's cousin, who now would be her heir, spoke sharply to their leader:

"Seize her!"

It was not a pretty sight, the dragging of the girl from her bed, the girl who looked like an older Jennifer.

But just as they were dragging her from the room, having stuffed something that looked like an old rag in her mouth, there was another commotion, and a tall, broad-shouldered, fair faced man leaped in at the doorway and threw himself upon her captors to such effect that he succeeded in tearing the gag from her mouth and in knocking down two of the men, before he was subdued, held by many pairs of rough hands, and confronted by Gerald, the girl-victim's cousin.

"You come late, Wilfred," Gerald said, contemptuously. And his companion Morland laughed a short, sharp laugh like a bark —that unkind laugh that seemed to lurk just behind his thin lips.

"If you had learned of this in time to hasten your return home, no doubt you might have thwarted me. As it is, the castle is ours, and the lady will burn—and promptly. She will burn as a witch. Her holdings are mine doubly, thus—as once her heir, and again as her denouncer. The girl-child that is yours and hers cannot inherit, as you know."

The tall, fair man struggled, and it was no good. He was one against too many. Then he spoke bitterly, and a desperate, bitter sorrow darkened his face so that it might have been a stranger's, so changed it was.

"My wife knows naught of witching!" he cried; and Gerald laughed in his turn, and agreed.

"True. But to the magistrate it will appear otherwise. He has been promised heavy bags of gold. She and her black cat shall both be put to the question, and what think you the answer will be? Yet, if it comforts you, Sir Late-Come Wilfred, I know as well as any that your young wife is no witch."

THEN a strange thing happened.

The older girl who might have been an older Jennifer stood straight and tall, as though the fear of the fire had left her. For a moment her eyes rested in Wilfred's, and she seemed to seek a word to comfort him, and to find none. They would not meet again in life, unless at the stake, and the dreaming, watching child Jennifer somehow knew and understood all this quite clearly.

So the words that came to the lips of the doomed girl were a defiance drawn out of desperation, a strange, inverted thing that gave her courage that would go with her to the end of her short, dark road—and beyond.

"I will be a witch," she said, *"I will be.* And we will meet again, Cousin Gerald. It will be well for you, if you remember."

The bright, small, far-away picture faded. The sound of voices silenced. Somewhere frogs croaked, the smoky flare of torches was checkered moonlight and shadow, and their smoky smell was mildewy damp log smell, and Jennifer was with Midnight beside the pool.

Her eyes were heavy with sleep.

Then it was morning, and she was at home in bed. Midnight purred on the rug, green eyes turned up to welcome Jennifer into the new day.

Mother came into the room and took Jennifer's hands to pull her out of bed.

"Sleepy head! And how soundly you have slept—your bed hardly looks as though you had been it!" she said.

Jennifer was wondering and puzzled. Often she ran out into the night. But last night she could not remember the going, or the return. It was as though she had flown lightly through the air, leaving her body to sleep quietly at home. Then she, the real Jennifer, had seen the picture in the pool—or the pool had made her see it. (Years later, she was to learn the word "scrying.")

She rubbed her bare feet together, and looked at each in turn. No mud was on them; there were mud patches all around

the pool between the grassy places. Had it all been a dream within a dream? She didn't believe it.

No, it was real, and there was a meaning to it; but this meaning was beyond her understanding.

IT WAS autumn when she found the cabin in the swamp wood. Old, long abandoned—but with fresh, green things growing in neat little patches of cultivated soil. And there was the servant, the Jamaican woman, Maisie! She was sitting on the stoop, watching an earthworm that had been crushed in the middle—it lay in the print of a shoe, and it was doing something quite extraordinary with itself.

What seemed to be the head, a pinkish blind blob on the end of a short stump of gray-brown unsmashed body, was trying to drag the maimed center after it. In the process—a hopeless one, for the crushed segment was stickily ground into the earth—this free segment was elongating to half its size and twice its length. At this point, the blind, pink head seemed to understand and to reconnoitre. It reared upright, bent backward, seeming to appraise the situation, not reconnoitre. It reared upright, bent back, ward, seemed to appraise the situation not by anything approximating sight, but by a kind of radar. Then, incredibly, with infinitely many and patient writhings and twistings, it accomplished a perfect knot. Resting briefly, the pink head readdressed itself to its struggle for survival. Now it strained desperately forward, stretching to a new and still more slender length, and pulling tightly on the knot it had made. It was, had Jennifer known it, doing a thing analogous to the tying off and suturing of an umbilical cord. With other periods of rest and renewed wrigglings, the thing accomplished its purpose. The new-formed earthworm broke free, squirmed away from the abandoned wreckage which was most of its old body, and vanished in a clump of grass.

The rear end of the worm seemed to be coming to life and to be contemplating similar surgery, but the Jamaican woman stooped down—she had a broad leaf in her hand—scooped up the rest of the carcass, living and dead, and tossed it away toward the bushes.

"Does one cut an earthworm in two, both ends will wriggle off," she said in a queer, thoughtful tone. "I thought this was for dying—never heard of a clever, humanlike trick like that. I'd been watching it long; I like to watch creatures of any kind. It was when you came, Miss Jennifer, that it began *that* trick. You're kin to all creatures, you have the forces of nature in you, and so they can take from you too. Even from things in your mind you don't yet know about. It's what I've expected of you, with your night wandering ways that your home folk never dream of. Like *her*, in the Book."

From that day, Maisie was partner with Jennifer and Midnight; but it was years before she spoke again of the Book. She took them into the cabin, and showed them its few furnishings, and how she had cleared away the cobwebs from the corners where chair and table and an age-blackened old chest stood. Some day Maisie might marry Nathan, the colored man-of-all-work who helped around on the farms and in the small town of Midville, where soon Jennifer would be driven daily to school. Maisie thought of buying this cabin with the cheap land around it, too swampy for real farming. So she had made her garden here—a garden of herbs with unfamiliar, pretty names that rang pleasantly in Jennifer's ears.

Several years of school passed, and Jennifer was ten. A cousin of Jennifer's father came to live in Midville with his wife and fourteen year old son. Jennifer was told to call Mr. Jamieson, Uncle Morton, although he was actually her second cousin. The boy was Mort. He immediately acquired a huge, liver-colored dog and named him Brutus, or "Brute" for short.

Brute was well-named, and it was hard to say whether Midnight or Jennifer detested him most. Mort would come to play with Jennifer, and delight in seeing Brute drive Midnight up a tree, and in Jennifer's tears and protests. Jennifer learned to hide from Mort, and when compelled to play with him she would play games older than her age—feigning headaches, spilling things on her dresses so that she must go and

change, inventing all kinds of strategies. Mort, then, might perhaps start home but double back and hide in yard or woods, and pounce upon her, Brute pouncing also with his drooling mouth and snarling growl.

Uncle Morton opened a bank in Midville, which was a prosperous town surrounded by large farms, and Jennifer developed the theory that her parents catered to him for this reason and that this was why she must make some pretense at playing with her cousin and his ugly dog. Jennifer's father was a writer who did rather well with royalties; but it was probable that he had very little money in comparison with a banker. This idea might have originated among the school children, who bragged about their own parents and assessed the relative importance of other parents, as children do. At any rate Jennifer accepted it, and since she had had no experience of relatives other than her father and mother before the coming of the Jamieson family, she had no knowledge of the recognition of such ties which most children come by naturally.

THEN, in Jennifer's eleventh year, there came the awful day.

Mort and Brute had come "to play." The teasing and tormenting had been more cruel than usual, and Jennifer had shut herself and Midnight in her room.

"You seem to have trouble with Jennifer whenever you are out of my sight!" Jennifer heard her mother, for once openly scolding the boy. "Jennifer may be touchy and sensitive, but I am getting tired of having your visits end up with her crying. Perhaps a rough boy as big as you and four years older shouldn't try to play with a little ten-year-old girl. You had better go home, now—"

She stopped, because already Mort was going down the path to the gate, whistling and snapping his fingers at his dog, and it was not the way of Jennifer's mother to waste words. She was not given to scolding or to fuss. She was not, perhaps, given overmuch to studying her young daughter, so long as she was well and usually happy. Jennifer's father and mother were very much in love, very companionable, and perhaps they left Jennifer too far outside the the closeness of their own companionship. Some parents would have long ago discovered Jennifer's queer little expeditions and learned something of her secret life—which had in no way diminished with the coming of school days.

Now Jennifer sensed the ultimatum in her mother's words. She had come almost to the point of forbidding Mort's visits, and Jennifer's heart leaped up in hope.

Then, only moments later, she was in the depths.

Mort, also, must have recognized the note of almost-decision in her mother's speech. He would know that his time for openly tormenting his little cousin was coming to a close, and he would retaliate. Right now, Jennifer felt with the peculiar certainty that was never wrong. Mort was not on his way home. He would linger about, somewhere, prowl in the places Jennifer loved—

The cabin! That was it; today he would find the cabin he had never seen or known about. Once he had started along the almost imperceptible path, and Jennifer had diverted him, had gone with him willingly into the unused barn instead, and let him tie her up and play a nasty game about bandits. The boy's eyes had turned back toward the barely visible path that was just the slightest wearing down and pressing aside of the grasses by Jennifer's light feet and Midnight's weightless paws, and the careful feet of Maisie, who never walked twice in exactly the same place. That Mort had put the little matter aside for future reference, Jennifer knew well.

She flew into the kitchen, where Maisie was timing a cake in the oven.

"I *can't* ruin your mother's cake, Miss Jennifer," the maid said, worriedly. "I'll come as quick as I can. Do you think it's right for you to go ahead without me? That's a rude, rough boy, and that's an ugly, mean dog. Yet—are you right, he mustn't prowl alone around the cabin. I've worried of late—"

Maisie never talked like other colored people, even in excitement. That was because she was from Jamaica. Jennifer wondered sometimes why she had left a well

established family of her own there, to renew an old bond of servitorship with the Newcomb family. Jennifer's father respected her highly, her mother valued her, and they both recognized in that happening a thing to be proud of.

Jennifer's feet flew along the path, Midnight's tail waving before. The sky was clear, a wonderful blue, the outdoor world a place of beauty and of reassurance. Then, subtly, all things changed.

She was skimming now through the swamp wood, and the shadows had a brooding look. They were trying to tell her something—to point the way ahead, or maybe the way back. Jennifer heard the booming cry of some bird high up in the sky, and it was a sound of warning. When she gained the cabin she knew a moment's relief, for neither boy nor dog were in sight; yet as she entered, she felt as though eyes were watching.

Inside, everything was right. New cobwebs had drifted in, and a spider was spinning a big web across the open window space. It was more than a week since Jennifer or Maisie had come here; the woods were always trying to take the cabin to themselves, and these were the little marks of their slow and leisurely and quite friendly encroachment.

Jennifer sat in the one chair, and Midnight leaped to her lap. Then the fear came stronger, even before the shadow in the doorway. And then in the little room with Jennifer were fear, and the boy she hated, and his ugly dog. Midnight's claws dug instinctively into her young mistress's lap.

But Mort's hand was on the dog's collar.

"Our cousin doesn't like us, Brute," he said. "We're not good enough to play with her. Her mother practically told us that! You can have the little black cat in a minute, Brute. Before we leave, you may tear her to pieces. You've always wanted to, haven't you? She's a nasty black cat for a little witch, anyway. Our cousin Jennifer likes to wear green; I've read about witches, how they used to wear green, with green shoes on their feet."

Jennifer's wide, frightened eyes strayed briefly down to the green cotton dress; to the green leather sandals; and back to Mort's face. Her own face, she knew, must have turned quite white, because it felt cold and stiff. She could feel the wideness of her eyes, she knew she was staring and tried to make herself stop. If she could pretend that she was not afraid. If Maisie would come!

"Stand, Brute!" Mort ordered, taking his hand from the collar. The animal, trained to obey, became a statue, the growl deep in his body, his hackles risen like a wolf's.

"So you've a hideout here, Jennifer!" Mort said, addressing her for the first time directly. "A funny old place for a girl. But then, I forgot. You're not an ordinary girl, but a witch, and I suppose you have a garden of old witching herbs outside there. I never saw plants like them, anyway. But what I want to see now, is the inside of that chest. If I were as silly as you I'd say there was treasure in that chest. It's old—it might be a century old. Or even more."

He stooped over it. There was a brass lock. The key, Jennifer knew, Maisie wore on a chain under her dress. He wouldn't be able to open it.

But he walked to the door, saying "Watch!" to the dog, and in a moment he was back with a big rock. He knelt and pounded with the rock until the lock broke, and half of it came away.

He opened the chest, and there was only one thing in it. A book bound in black leather, and with a lock on it too, another brass lock without a key. It would open as the chest had opened, when it was smashed.

Jennifer got to her feet, knowing that this was the Book, the one her mother thought had been burned, the one Maisie had saved and cherished. Knowing that its falling into this boy's hands was an awful thing.

"You mustn't. Please—Oh, please!—" she began.

Then there was a rustle of starched skirts, a swift running of feet across the floor, and Maisie was struggling with the boy, trying to wrest the book from him.

Mort's right hand went up with the rock in it, and his arm came down, and Maisie was lying on the floor, blood on her head.

Mort, still holding the book in one hand and the rock in the other, looked queerly at his cousin. On his face was terror, but

it was an ugly terror, and something else was mingled with it that made Jennifer's breath come short.

"You'll tell on me," the boy said. "You'll tell them I did it. How do I know Maisie won't die? She had no right to lay her filthy black hands on me, but she may die for all that, and you'll tell them that I did it. But if I do to you what I did to her—and finish it up for both of you—"

This, Jennifer thought, is death. And the two visions flashed through her mind like pictures drawn by lightning. The men in armor, taking out the girl to burn. The witch naming, by the girl's cousin. And the girl was Jennifer a grown-up, older Jennifer. I haven't even had time to grow up, Jennifer thought. And that was *her* cousin, and Mort is mine.

"They'll think a tramp did it. They'll probably think a tramp made them come here in the first place. No place for a little girl to come to; or the woman either."

He was thinking out loud, the purpose growing in his eyes.

"The damned cat. Sic 'em, Brute!"

Like a thunderbolt, the dog flashed into action, teeth bared, leaping on Jennifer to get at the cat. With a frantic yowl, Midnight leaped from Jennifer's slack grasp and flew through the door, Brute whirling after her.

"I was a fool," the boy muttered. "Brute might have marked you up, Jennifer. This way it could be a tramp—"

He came closer, and his hand that held the rock went up as it had done before. The book fell unheeded to the floor; this was a planned thing, and he was going to do it thoroughly.

Jennifer felt herself stand straight and tall. Something had entered into her. Not courage—she had none, and she knew it. It was a thing from outside herself. It had to do with the ending of the vision of the taking of the girl to be burned as a witch.

"I will be a witch, Cousin. And it will be well for you if you remember!"

She felt her eyes grow bigger, felt a burning go out from them like a sharp, bright weapon. She felt the straightening and lifting in her body raise her above her little-girl stature.

(*"You had an idée fixe—and you had already heard talk of things that only your sub-conscious remembered; and for a moment you hypnotized the boy,"* later the psychiatrist had said.)

"Stop it, Jennifer! Don't look at me like that!" Mort suddenly had screamed. "I believe you *are* a witch! You've grown taller, or something!"

Jennifer hoped he might go away, because of the strange fright that had taken him. She stood waiting. She had taken a step that she could not take backward again; and she was no longer afraid. But she hoped that he would go away.

But he ground his teeth together, and his face was contorted.

"They said in the old days, *'Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live!'* he shouted, as though he was trying to drown out sound and thought. "And anyway, whatever you are, I daren't let you go."

And then it happened, just in the last moment that was to have been Jennifer's to live.

There was a heavy clap of thunder, and the dim little room was filled with blazing white light. Roof and walls seemed to rock and strain outward. Jennifer fell into the chair behind her.

WHEN she could look, Mort lay still on the floor, and Maisie was trying to sit up.

Jennifer helped her to her feet. Maisie bent over the boy.

"He isn't dead; but near it," she said.

"I feel all right, Miss Jennifer. We'll go together and tell your folks."

Uncle Morton and Aunt Cora took Mort away to the hospital, and Brute with them.

Later, there was a long, serious talk in the living room of the Newcomb house, to which Jennifer listened, crouching on the landing, Midnight in her arms. (Midnight had not been torn to pieces by Brute, any more than on previous occasions. Midnight had the wind's speed, and claws to climb, and had come down out of some tall tree when the coast was clear.)

"Our boy will live, but it was a near thing. And a *queer* thing. There wasn't a cloud in the sky all day. Nobody in that

cabin was hurt except our boy. The cabin wasn't damaged. How a bolt of lightning could come in and half kill Mort and touch nothing else—? And the boy is delirious, and babbles of witchcraft. He thinks Jennifer did it. I don't know *what* to think!"

"Do you seriously mean to imply that our ten year old girl tried to kill your fourteen year old boy with a bolt of lightning?"

Jennifer's father spoke in a lightly ironical tone—yet there was an unadmitted seriousness under it. He continued:

"Morton, this is an isolated farming community. Many of our farmers are educated people. Still, quite a good deal of old Pennsylvania stock is represented here, and there are places in Pennsylvania where they take hex-ing quite seriously. I shouldn't care to have you spread stories about an innocent little girl, even if she were not my daughter. So I'd advise you to be a little careful about repeating what that boy of yours says in delirium. He is a rough, violent young fellow, and quite a few things could be truthfully said about him that would do him no good."

Jennifer's mother spoke for the first time.

"Both Maisie and Jennifer say—*not* in delirium—that Mort knocked Maisie down with that rock; and Jennifer says he was going to kill her with it, so she couldn't tell."

Aunt Cora cried excitedly:

"Well, that's why Jennifer would have *wanted* to do something to Mort! That black woman laid violent hands on our boy and he defended himself; that's the way *I* put it together. He picked up the first thing that came handy and struck her once in self defense—and she wasn't seriously injured after all. But then Jennifer struck Mort—"

"Yes. With a bolt of lightning."

It was the ironical tone again.

There was a little silence.

Uncle Mort said then, rather wearily:

"You are a writer, Cliff, and I'm a banker. It isn't easy to move *my* business, the thing I've built up here. How about it if I bought your place? You'll want to get Jennifer into city schools some day. As I will Mort, eventually. It would be so easy for you to go away."

There was another silence.

"I'll let you do it, Morton," Jennifer's father said at last. "Maybe our little girl should have a different life. She has been through a horrible experience today; and if you are going to start some silly kind of talk about her—I think I'd as soon put distance between us. As you say, it isn't easy to move a bank."

That was the way of their leaving the lovely, lonely places where birds and frogs and worms were people; where night took you into its arms so that you floated in it, light as a cloud.

In the different kind of life, old things were partly forgotten, after a while. Maisie did not go with them—father and mother decided that should be part of the change. She stayed and married Nathan.

But the day before the Newcomb family went away, Maisie let Jennifer read some of the pages in the Book, which would remain with Maisie.

THE Jennifer who stood now alone on the balcony dreaming back was twenty-two. It was a dozen years since she had seen that diary. There had been few letters from Maisie. Jennifer's father and mother had died together in an automobile crash just after her twenty-first birthday, leaving her an incredibly large inheritance. She would never worry about money unless she was foolish enough to tamper with gilt-edged investments. Her father and mother had lived comfortably—perhaps, in the later years, even luxuriously. Jennifer had never thought much about the way they lived, because she had not been brought up to think much about money.

She had begun to try her hand at writing, since she had inherited an interest in this from her father. She had traveled a little, and found it interesting to dabble in some of the off-trail fields of psychology. Something had always prevented her revisiting Iowa, something always seemed a reason for postponment. Of course, with a part of her mind, she had never stopped looking forward to again seeing Maisie. Maisie, who alone, once, had quite understood Jennifer;

even though in showing her the Book on that last day—New England Jennie's pitiful diary—she had frightened her.

Some of those passages might have been burned into Jennifer's brain in letters of fire, so well did she remember:

"They would not have taken me, had not the lightning struck down Abner. Nor would it have struck him, had he not offered me violence. He wished to marry me once, and would have been a cruel enough husband, I think; but my heart was wise, and I could wed none but Richard—though our happiness was so brief. Even now I cannot stop seeing his eyes and hearing his voice, and if he were back from the sailing trip he might find a way to save me. Abner knew full well his ship could not return for yet a month, when he made his demand upon me that I should sign over to him all of my own estate.

"So of my love and Richard's there will be left only my poor, tiny, infant daughter; and even the goodly lands and money heritage in England which is mine pass by an entail at my death to Abner's father, Abner being dead. This was truly Abner's purpose and desire, to gain it from me by fair means or foul; and as a last resort, his thoughts turned on my death.

"They put me to the question, and it was a half drowning in the river. And sorry I am that I would run away and learn to swim with Richard and Abner when the three of us were children—to swim so well with my limber body that even tying of feet and hands together mattered not. It were better to drown than burn. They say that in this new world witches hang, and are not burned; but I will be an exception—Abner's father has arranged it. On the record, the sentence is hanging; but they are piling faggots high on Gallows Hill."

There was an illegible, tear-stained page here, and then the writing grew clearer again:

"My black cat Midnight has been taken from me, and I think, tortured. She is to burn with me. And yet, and yet—*it is true that I am a witch!* Ever, till now, I have had to wish, and the thing was done. And when Abner laid hands on me—to kill me in his fury, and invent some tale to clear himself, I know now as well as then—the sky was blue and clear. And I stood up tall and faced him down for a moment and called on lightning to strike him dead.

"So, because of the clearness of that day, the townspeople were sure. From my childhood I had willed things to happen and it was so—and others knew thereof. Once I marked on pieces of paper various signs and numbers, and I could call to another, and that one blindfold, which to draw unseen from the pack; and in some way the thing was done. Abner himself played at the game with me, until—we were little more than children then!—he suddenly cursed me, accusing me of witchcraft. Yes, I have been unlike the other children, maids, and wives!

"And yet—I have but defended myself, beyond the harmless play! Maria, the slave woman taken in raid from Jamaica, has told me that witchcraft descends in family lines, and that she herself has her knowledge of herbs and magic spells from her own mother. It is certain neither my mother nor hers had this curse that yet might seem a harmless blessing, but for the minds of men. But it may be that far back there was one kin to me, and so like, even, I could be herself reborn. Abner was kin to me, hateful though he was; so perhaps it is natural that in strange dreams a kinsman called me witch and caused my death. Stranger it is, that those dreams visited my nights before ever any named me witch; yet I have noted in my experiencing important matters that often past and present and future overlie each other in a pattern others know not in their living.

"Maria (not only can she read, but has read much)—has told me it was thus with witches and wizards ever, from Merlin of King Arthur's Court to the sorcerers of dark skinned races. Maria says like calls to like, and that it was a fate which sent her to me before I yet was orphaned, to be my handmaid. And that through after ages those of her blood will cleave to those of mine; and that souls strong with love of living may return in other bodies, to find again the old loves and loyalties—and the old hates too.

"Oh, I am so young to die, but twenty!

Life has become so bitter that I sicken of it. Yet might I, one day, roam again the woods and the sweet hidden places, visit dark, shining pools and hear the voices of the wild things—somehow finding Richard, who must go seeking me as I seek him—

"It was to be tomorrow I should die, by the judges' verdict. I hear a distant tramp of many feet, and I know they are coming for me now. It will be the slyness of Abner's father, who thus will have me burned before I may be hung, an easier death. I would write faster—

"I was named Jennet, and the name shortened to Jennie because when first I made the birds answer my call, my mother was afraid for me; someone had told her there was a witch named Jennet so far back as the days of the first English kings. I pray no name like it will be used by one who may come after of my line.

"Yes, I would live again! Heaven, they say, is not for such as I; yet I cannot feel evil in me. Only—I love the earth, its beauty and its creatures. One loving earth so much is not fit, I know, for Heaven! All the sermons have taught me that.

"I hear the clang of the great gate. Maria will save this Book.

"I am a witch, but now I cannot help myself. Terror and tears, I think, have drained away my strength. Perhaps if I can call on all the powers I knew in the old, happy days, I may release my senses from the knowledge of the flames.

"They are here—"

JENNIFER had strained her eyes to decipher the shaking script, the faded ink.

Maisie, then, held up a mirror before her.

"You haven't reached the years of studying your own beauty—maybe you never will," she said. "You live by the beat of your young heart, not for the shape of an eyebrow. Now, look!"

Sleek bangs and floating curls of dark, dark auburn with the bluish sheen of a blackbird's wing. Wide open eyes looked back at Jennifer deeply and intently; and they were not quite matched in color, for one was a deep violet blue, and the other had a greenish tinge.

"Your eyes are lovely, and they are sea-colored," Maisie said. "Yet they 'took' witches once upon a time for no better reason than that the two eyes did not perfectly match, and red hair was no help—even so rich and dark a red as yours. Don't frighten you, Miss Jennifer. I'm thinking, though, it is best you make a lifelong study of being like other people—on the outside, at least. It's right they are taking me from you, or you from me, but I'm glad they're leaving you Midnight, out of all your young life here. Cats aren't like people think, but much truer and wiser, and Midnight is no ordinary cat.

"You have known the hateful cousin, and come out well, so far. I'm wondering if you've seen, yet, a well favored boy with clear eyes and fair complexion, one you like to think of?"

Yes. It was part of the sorrow of ending things, finishing, going away.

"A boy in school. His name is Dick—I don't know the last one. I'll never see him again, Maisie. Not you, not him, and not this place again."

"Me, you will see if trouble strikes you," Maisie promised grimly. "This boy? Why, you called him Dick; it was 'Richard,' in the Book. Ah, yes, Miss Jennifer. I think that you will see that boy again. Only—first, there seems always to come the ugly, dark one. There is a pattern, and you are part of it, Miss Jennifer. Yet, these times are different. People half believe, now in a thing they call telepathy, and don't kill one who has it; once, they did.

"Yet, you've drawn down hate and accusation already in your childhood, because the forces of nature saved you at your call. What was right and what was wrong with that boy Mort didn't save you from the ugly talk.

"It's better, my baby, that you're going. Better for a while—that you forget."

WELL, for a long time, she seemed almost to have forgotten. Why, then, just lately, had she tossed and turned at night, feared to sleep, and dreamed wild dreams?

Until, today, she had gone to the psychiatrist.

One thing, for sure, was this: he was plausible, with his fixations which didn't explain, his reversing of cause and effect in a way he would have called Jennifer fanciful for doing. Yet, he was plausible. But he had waked all the old things; not laid ghosts, but raised them.

He had thrust Jennifer into a twilight zone of self-horror. She could feel again the hot flush of shame surging over her, burning her cheeks, burning her body. The little girl of long ago who had sneaked out to roam in the night must have been utterly abnormal, a kind of mental monstrosity. She had not faced that early queerness, before. Nor had she had to speak of it to anyone. How basic *was* that queerness? The doctor had prompted her with suggestions and questions, hinting at other monstrousnesses that had never been hers, but which he seemed to think logical concomitants of her own peculiarities. The shame had deepened.

Now the night touched the sore spots with healing magic that was known to her, though almost forgotten. Now, alone on the balcony she came out—quite suddenly—on the other side of the horror the suave man with the little goatee had wakened in her today.

A shooting star fell. In its brief flaming moment, the girl plunged out of the bondage of other people's thinking, the thinking the little doctor epitomized. She came back into the bigger life long denied her; when every cloud and star were living part of Jennifer, and the low voices of the night spoke to her and through her. The Jennifer who had lived inside her body might now be thawing and warming into vital litheness, after a long glacial age. Her blood flowed faster; her eyes saw and her ears heard more. She was—she dared again to be—the real Jennifer. Not a Jennifer to show to other people, but she, herself, living closer to the very heart of living than other people could ever understand.

The night itself changed with her.

Fireflies came out like stars in the park, the trees looked liked Christmas trees. The real stars brightened. She could trace the directions of their westward drift across the sky, she knew the patterns they were weaving. She felt the earth's majestic turning toward the east and morning. The clouds made shapes and pictures; the soft, fluffy plump ones belonged in a fairy tale book. She followed the flopping swoops of a bat; they were comic, and somehow endearing. An owl hooted far away.

She wanted to dance, to fly. Instead, she walked back into the big room she had left—half an hour or years ago, as you counted time.

The electric lights annoyed her; as she realized this, all but a few dim ones blacked out.

"Fuse blown, somewhere," one of the young men at the baize covered table grumbled. "Good they have some lights on a different circuit."

"It's light enough now to see perfectly well," a pretty girl said on a singing tone. "I like it better this way."

There was a quick flutter of tiny wings. Two white night moths had followed Jennifer in, and were circling around her. After them came some of the fireflies, half a dozen or more.

"Why, this is terrible!" a woman shrieked, suddenly. "They ought to screen this place."

"Don't be inhospitable," a gray haired man reproached her. "It is very rare for them to fly outside the park. They must be wind-borne."

But then Jennifer's ears lost interest in the small talk. Her eyes had found something. All the years of her life, she had wondered, now and then and intermittently, about another thing that made her not like other girls. Other girls seemed so happily easy to satisfy in the matter of young men, but Jennifer, often companioned, had yet been alone. Always her eyes had seemed to be seeking and never finding.

What she saw now was a tall, blond young man with strongly clean-cut features and clear blue-gray eyes that all but drew her bodily across the room.

"The moths flutter around her as though she were a light," he said to someone—it might be to himself. The words sounded like poetry being made or quoted, but he was, Jennifer knew, simply speaking a thought. "A light. Or a sprite, something that belongs to the winged things that fly

when the stars are out. The fireflies—look at them!"

There was a queer moment. Everybody looked now, and everybody saw them fluttering around Jennifer like a small, fairy guard of honor. Then a scientific looking woman with straight cropped hair explained: "She was out there long enough to get the breeze from the park into her clothes and hair. Bugs follow anything outdoorsy, once they stray over city streets. There must be a good breeze from the park —I'll be lucky if my allergy doesn't get started up."

He was coming across the room. He touched Milt on the shoulder, passing him to do it. He said to him only a word: "Please?"

The two young men crossed to Jennifer together; Milt with what Jennifer called to herself his air of gloom, this other with the sun in his hair and his tanned skin, and its shining in his eyes. Milt made the introductions. Jennifer did not think—"Dear name!" like a girl in a play. She thought instead: "What does his name matter? He is the one." Yet she was glad to know his name, of course. Dick Morgan. She had known a good many Dicks. Six or seven. She couldn't remember any of them mattering in the least, until now.

SOMEONE demanded that Jennifer take another turn at calling the dice—that silly game was still going on. Quickly, to get it over, she ran to the table and stood leaning forward, her hands, palms down, pressing against the baize.

The scientific woman with the shingle was throwing. She tossed one down behind the cardboard shield someone had placed so that only those at the thrower's end could see. A while ago they had shielded the throw with their hands; they had been working on certain complicated techniques since.

The ivory fell, rolling a little.

"Two!" Jennifer called. She was wrong, as she had been each time before. The top face showed a six when the cardboard was lifted. At once the lady doctor—Dr. Smythe, that was it—retrieved it, and threw again, and Jennifer followed with a call of five. The screen was lifted again, and the top of the cube showed two spots.

THE sequence continued. After Jennifer's call of five, the top square showed five spots, but for that throw, Jennifer's call had been three. Next, the cube showed three; Jennifer called three again, and the following throw brought a second three. Jennifer then called four, three, three, one, six, three, four, five, one and one. And the dice followed: four, three, three, one, six, three, four, five, one. When the next throw was made, a thin, sharp featured smallish man with glasses, who had kept a written score throughout the evening, called a halt before Jennifer could speak.

"None of you have realized what the young lady is doing!" he said. "You have seen a demonstration beyond anything on record, or I think so. Of course—a dozen throws is a short sequence. I'd like to run her through several hundred! Anyway, the young lady has missed on every call except when she repeated the threes. If that last throw is a one—we will look at it now- -"

It was one.

The young man resumed, beaming.

"Miss—Ah, Newcomb, isn't it?—Miss Jennifer Newcomb. Thank you. Well, she hasn't *read* the dice; she has controlled them. They have followed her, throw by throw, without a miss, eleven times. She may or may not be clairvoyant, or telepathic; what she is, dominantly—at least tonight—is one possessed of the far rarer gift of *telekinesis*. This involves the control by mental powers of matter, inanimate, or animated on a low level in some cases—Previous examples on record have included—"

The crowd around the table stared at Jennifer, then leaned toward the speaker. He gave examples, principally one example. A germ in an aqueous field under a microscope, the lens quartered by hair-width lines. The law of averages would move the microbe from dead center into any one quarter of the field once out of four times. Brooks in England—wasn't it?—had seemed to drive it by the power of his mind into one selected field, over extended trials. For the selected quarter field he had raised the ratio from once in four times to just under

twice in four. That didn't begin to compare with Jennifer—

She turned pleading eyes on Milt, and, a little shyly, on Dick Morgan. Let them get her out of it! What she saw in their faces interested her more than the talk of the little man in eyeglasses. Milt's dark face was, seemingly, more brooding than she had ever seen it; she read some obscure dislike of her recent exhibition there. Dick, on the other hand, regarded her with a deep, incredulous tenderness. It might be that to him what she had done was wonderful—or merely that *she* was wonderful. To Jennifer herself, it had been rather boring. Things often turned out as she willed them, and she had felt herself willing the dice as she called.

None of it mattered now, anyway. For she was going out into the summer evening, not alone with Milt, but also with Dick.

Outside, her heart slid dizzily upward, while she listened to Milt's proposition. For once in the six months since they had once more met, Milt was doing the right, the perfect thing.

"I do research in the Gyro Labs, as you both know," he said. "If it's agreeable to you, Jennifer—and I'm sure it is to Dick—I'll let him drive you home, and I'll run out there. There's a thing I really ought to see to, before I turn in."

THEY drove the long way home, to Jennifer's apartment. They laughed a lot and talked a lot—inconsequential, whimsical talk that showed the shape and color of two minds, the likenesses and the charming differences—and that voiced and revoiced the certainty that talks like these would go on between these two for the duration of time that was forever.

They said goodbye at the door of Jennifer's apartment. Midnight came and rubbed against Dick's ankles, purring fondly, her blue-black fur shining like metal, her waving tail held high. Seeing Dick stare at the really beautiful animal, Jennifer dared tell him one of her secrets—one that had gone with her through the years.

"I could never keep this cat behind locked doors, I think she'd rather die, so she's never been a prisoner, and she can run down the fire escapes to the street. Midnight is too smart to be run over; I haven't worried when a few times she has been gone for quite a time. The funny thing is, Dick, that when she goes away like that, each time she comes back younger and spryer than she left. She renews her youth by being nomadic; maybe all cats could, if they were let to be free, I don't know. Once a neighbor noticed the change in Midnight after one of those trips, and said it must be a different cat that came back: one that looked exactly like Midnight, and knew her way around instinctively somehow, with a cat's unusual kind of instinct. The same cat or another—Midnight doesn't know anything about growing old. When ever the time comes, I'm going to try to imitate her."

"Something about you can't grow old, that's for sure," Dick said. "The same thing that gives you more of everything than you have a right to. You—I'd have had to see you to quite believe you, Jennifer. The cat, now: Midnight? How long have you had her? Quite a good many years—"

It was hardly a question; he seemed almost to know. When Jennifer told him the answer, he looked at her intently. Then he stooped and stroked the purring cat.

"If anyone asks you what you *really* think, you'll have to admit that, beautiful as she is, Midnight is no impossible type!" he suggested. "Coincidence, if something happened to a dark blue Maltese with the hint of white on her face, and just a certain look and size, and an almost identical cat turned up in her place—the same, but younger. Yet there are other cats *like* this one, and maybe you induce them to come to you by—telekinesis. I must talk to the boy with the thick lenses who knew all about it. If a man in London can shove a microbe over a hair-line by thinking about it, a girl who loves a cat like Midnight could call herself in a replacement and hardly know the difference. For my money, I'd tell neighbors I found another cat and kept the name."

This was—advice. Just the shadow, the flicker of a worry touched Jennifer's happiness. Yes, you could tell people the little plausible things they expected to hear. It

wasn't too much trouble; and you could go on being yourself, and not care.

"I like your being just as wonderful as you are," Dick said. "But I think we'll devise schemes for keeping part of your light under a bushel; it's a little game we'll play together. People's eyes can stand so *little* light, that's why they seal them so tightly and get so upset when something jerks them wide open. The world does progress; generations ago, a person who could direct the throw of the dice would have been in trouble. Now, cute little societies experiment in such things, make little parlor games of them.

"I'm going now. Tomorrow I'll call you. If you ever need me—to hunt a missing cat, or anything—I think I'll know. See you!"

JENNIFER was almost ready for bed when the doorbell rang. Idiotically, she thought of Dick. In her rush to the door she had no time to know her thought *was* idiotic, he wouldn't dash in at one o'clock; she had only time to glimpse herself in the long mirror by the door, to see the bright luster of her dark copper hair with its blue-black sheen, the swirl of her dark blue taffeta robe.

She threw the door open, and stepped back—startled more deeply than was, she thought, quite reasonable.

Milt walked in, closing the door behind him.

"You'll marry me, Jennifer?" he said, without preamble.

Her lips formed a silent "No." Her eyes studied Milt, his face, his manner, desperately, swiftly; her heart was beating too fast.

He had tried to force his love on her before, but not like this. He had threatened to kill himself if she did not marry him. That was last week. She ought not have seen him again. Now, she knew it. It had seemed easier to be friendly, to hope he would get over it. Other young men had loved her without her wish, and it seemed very hard to get them over it; but there was this dark intensity in Milt that seemed inappropriate in a lover. Almost, there was a threat about what he called love.

"I thought you'd say no. Again, and always," he said, looking down at her. "I'm supposed to be somewhere else now, Jennifer. I stopped at the lab, and two friends of mine came by for me. We left together. The night watchman saw us go, and the men I left with will swear I've been with them all night, that we were playing poker. I *do* gamble, you know. That's one way I lost what money I had, and then I gambled some more, trying to force a turn of luck. It doesn't work; but I wasn't cut out to be a poor scientist. That's all right for Dick; what he can get as an expert will satisfy him—and anyway, I'm no expert.

"So I'm desperately in debt, and I want money, a lot of it. Your side of the family had the inheritance, Jennifer, and it wasn't fair. Our mutual great uncle just happened to like your father—he ought to have liked mine. If I can marry your money, Jennifer, I won't be sorry to have you with it."

He stood there, waiting.

Jennifer's lips were stiff and dry, her mind whirling. One thing stood out—

"You said: *my* side of the family—" she quoted, on a rising inflection.

"Dear Jennifer, yes. I changed my name from Morton Jamieson to Milton Craig, when I left Chicago. I was in a chemical lab there, but I owed everybody in Chicago, and I wanted my creditors to lose me. Some of them did. It was tough getting into Gyro here; actually, I pulled an amnesia stunt, and they needed a man, and I knew the stuff well enough to convince them. With enough money, there'll be no more of that. I only gambled to get money; if I have it, I'll know how to use it. Actually, I hate gambling. What I want is money, property. Yours, Jennifer."

"You come here in the middle of the night. And you tell me this," Jennifer said, very quietly.

"You get the idea, don't you?" Mort said. "You were always smart. *Too* smart. My father and mother died very prematurely, like your own. Yours in a car crash; mine in a flu epidemic out in Iowa. I'm next heir to the family fortune, after you. If you won't marry me, why there's another way! Dick brought you home, and I've been with friends all night."

Jennifer's voice was faint, now.

"*What* other way?

"You want to know the worst. You want details. Well, I'd expect that of you," her cousin said. "We've been a queer family, and both you and I could trace related blood lines back through the centuries. They were recorded in that book your old nurse, the Negro woman, set so much store by. Funny thing, by the way. You may not know this, but a tramp attacked her in that lonely cabin. He would have looted the place after killing her, but the only thing he thought might be of value was that old, old book with the brass lock on it. He brought it to me, thought it might be an antique; I spent summers back there off and on, and I did collect some antiques. I bought it from him, of course; next day I learned about the murder, but the fellow was far away by then. They never found him."

JENNIFER thought: he hired the tramp; or there was no tramp, and he killed Maisie himself. She wanted to cry, but there was no time. She would not cry again.

Mort went on talking.

"Back through the centuries, the fights over property rage," he said. "There are unprotected orphans, and there are villains who take what is theirs. That witchcraft charge has been repeated, always against the people who haven't harmed anybody except their persecutors. Some of the witches, though, came to no especial grief; there was one old, old woman who died at ninety, having been credited with witchcraft of a harmless sort all her life. She lived in England, just before the Puritan days when —I guess you know about the one they managed to burn on this side of the ocean. And about her cousin."

"I thought—you were my father's second cousin. And Maisie said her ancestress had been with my *mother's* family, back in New England?" Jennifer questioned, and wondered why it mattered, or if it did.

"That's a point well taken, Cousin Jennifer," Mort said, and his lips widened in a wolfish grin. "In recent generations, first cousins have not married in our family, but earlier, the laws of consanguinity were stretched pretty badly. You and I are kin

"... IMAGINE ME dancing with a scarecrow! How can he be so careless about his hair? It's straggly, unkempt, and ... Oh-oh—loose dandruff! He's got Dry Scalp, all right. He needs 'Vaseline' Hair Tonic."

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on both sides, Jennifer, and it has happened with incredible regularity. It's as though fate had to work itself out in our blood lines; though actually, the marriages were very understandable, I suppose. Your father and mother—such charming people, and congenial beyond the usual. My parents—pretty good sorts too, and thoroughly compatible. It's when the cousins meet and one wants what the other has just too badly—and there is hate instead of attraction, at least for one of them.

"Also when one of the cousins is a certain type of 'bad boy.' I'm that type, the very prototype. There was a recurrent descriptive touch—these villains had unbroken black brows, meeting over a hawk-like nose. D'you know, mother had my eyebrows parted by electrolysis to beautify me, when I was a kid? It still showed scar tissue when they brought me to Midville.

"So the stage is all set for trouble to strike again. To strike *you,* Jennifer—tonight. I'm not a superstitious kid now, and I know that little telepathic gifts and even ways of ordering dice about aren't major weapons. So—

"I believe you asked me what I'll do—exactly. You have heard of the pressure points—where the blood flows near the surface, where its flow is easily checked? There are two of those points in your little white neck, Jennifer, near the bottoms of your slightly pointed ears. You'll just go—to—sleep. It's a kind method.

"Really, too kind, in fact. You hate me, and for that I hate you. I can feel my hands squeezing the whole of your pretty throat, making you choke and strangle. Yet there's a chance, I think, that the pressure point stoppage may leave no certain mark—heart failure it may be called, perhaps, and that would be the safest thing, even though Dick came here with you—"

He bent over her, and a shadow swept downward over his face and changed it. Across the bridge of his nose where had been in boyhood the reddish mark, the shadow marked a groove, and the black eyebrows seemed to shoot together in one black, heavy line, completely joined.

It linked the childhood nightmare terror to the terror of now, and Jennifer screamed once, madly, wildly, before the long fingers reached her throat. Her heart pounded, and her breath was gone.

Then—suddenly—pouring into her like a warming flame, she knew a surge, a glow, the ecstasy of a sure power, of power beyond check or stay or doubt!

Her muscles were steel, and her slight body surged up under his hands, which clung to her throat, tightening their pressure, forcing her downward. And, even so, she had the feeling of growing taller, of being as strong and as tall as a young tree.

It lasted—it *could* last—for just a breathless moment. It need last no longer. She saw a horror, a fear beyond fear grow in Mort's eyes, felt the flaccid loosening of his death grip on her throat.

It was after that, that the air in the room seemed to split with a soundless explosion. A blaze of light coming from nowhere filled the room, and was gone.

Then Mort fell backward heavily, and lay staring at the ceiling with eyes that did not see it. This time, they would never see again.

WHEN the knock sounded on the door, Jennifer opened it only a crack. Her scream had been heard, she thought dully. Whoever had come would see that Mort was taken away. But—she would have to talk.

She couldn't say, "He tried to kill me, he tried before, he is my cousin and most of my family are nice lovely people, although some of the nicest have been witches and I am one." She couldn't say that the ones in her family who were not so nice, every now and then had been murderers, or else used to accuse their relatives of being witches, till the good people got the idea and that was how they became witches.

Tell them something like that, and they wouldn't say she killed Mort (or would they?) Anyway, they would say she was crazy. Perhaps she *would* be—if she had to talk and explain.

Then she realized that her cold hands were being held in warm ones. And then she knew that this was Dick.

The doctor Dick called, said Mort had had a stroke. He would, he said, have

thought this man had been struck by lightning had that been possible; since it wasn't possible, well, he had simply had a stroke.

"He was a sort of black sheep distantly related to Miss Newcomb," Dick said. "She told me when I came in here, that he had come up and insisted on quarreling with her about some money she had inherited. He *was* struck by lightning when he was a boy; they say they never quite get over that —is that right, Doctor?

"You see, we three all went to school in a little town in Iowa—Midville, Iowa. He and I majored in science, beginning there in high school, and went on to college together. I looked him up recently because I wanted to find Miss Newcomb again—I took it rather hard when her family moved from Midville. It took a long time to locate him, because he had gone in for wholesale gambling, and then someone started embezzlement proceedings against him, and then dropped the proceedings—but he didn't know that, so he changed his name. He talked to me about Miss Newcomb, when I found him again, and about this money—which was in execrable taste—and about some mysterious way in which he expected to come into money which ought to have been his. I didn't like the sound of any of it.

"I brought Miss Newcomb home tonight —but it seemed odd to me that he suggested my doing it. Some people believe in telepathy and that sort of thing, Doctor, though I'm sure you are a sensible scientific man who does not. Anyhow, I was sitting in my parked car smoking, and I couldn't bring myself to leave. I heard a scream—either that fellow threatened Miss Newcomb, or she thought so. Her screaming must have shocked and frightened him into the stroke; and she was out of her senses with horror when I finally got back up here to the tenth floor."

"There won't need to be anything about his being found in Miss Newcomb's apartment in my report," the doctor said. "This man, I'd say from his face alone, is no loss."

"BUT, Dick! After all, if I'm a witch—" Jennifer said.

"I'm the fair man who always came late —remember?" Dick reminded her. I came late, as usual; I'm glad this time you were enough of a witch to keep on pitching. It's a tough world, and if you—if we have a daughter, I hope she will be able to do the same.

"Remember, you're in good company, my Witch. Joan of Arc—well, she wasn't, and she didn't save herself, poor darling. As for you—I'd say that you are a few jumps outside the mechanical, hidebound present. Ahead and behind it both, perhaps. And a good, good girl, under special protection. And for sure, you and I aren't perpetuating the intermarrying habit that seems to have been one of the roots of your ancient family's troubles. You *are* marrying me?"

Jennifer knew a moment's almost wicked delight. She had only needed to be encouraged in it; this, she thought, would be eating her cake and having it too.

"Oh, yes. If you can overlook me being *me!*" she said.

They rode silently through the warm breeze in Dick's car. The road wound between a river and a grove, and Dick slowed and stopped in the shadow of an immense oak tree.

Jennifer's right hand smoothed the folds of her green dress. Her left hand was in her lover's right; her wide eyes with their deep-sea colors—not quite alike—shone into his; but she was thinking, making little rules.

"I shall only want things that are good and kind—that will please God," her thoughts ran. "I will remember to give little, practical, or very scientific explanations for things that might seem—well, unusual; and that will please people."

She continued aloud: "All my life I will contribute generously to the darling little Societies that study all the off-trail 'para' things. And give them lovely, scientific names. 'Clairvoyance'—'Telepathy'—'Telekinesis.' Oh, they're lovely names, as nice as the names of the herbs in poor Maisie's garden."

Dick laughed, and leaned over her, something shining in his hand: a silver chain, a pendant, fell around her neck.

Jennifer gave a cry of pleased surprise, followed by a falling note of disappointment.

"Darling!" Dick said. "I've thought of you with the moths flying about you that first night—so many times. And when I saw this—the blue, blue Brazilian butterfly under glass—I thought of you at once. I thought you'd like it, and I thought it was like you—your sort of thing!"

"No," Jennifer said reluctantly. "I'd wish it living!"

"I should have known. I'm sorry, Jennifer. I shall have to learn to know you—"

Something like twin fragments of the sky at its deepest zenith fluttered at Jennifer's bosom, concealing the ornament that once was vibrant with life.

Wings waved slowly, as though they had just come free of the chrysalis; the blue, blue butterfly soared—came down and softly flicked the girl's face once, skimmed upward, losing itself from sight in the larger blue.

"Look at the pendant!" Dick said, a little huskily.

It had lost all its color. Limned faintly, daintily, like a pale tracing in moss agate, the butterfly form was lovely still; but the rich, rare color was gone like a vanished rainbow.

"Ah, now it's beautiful, Dick," Jennifer said softly.

"I mustn't always get my way—" she thought.

But Dick's face wore the look of incredulous utter delight she had seen on it on the night of their meeting.

"Even more, to me, Jennifer," he answered. "All good things must love you. I hope he makes it on his magic wings, all the way back to Brazil."

The world's long turning had rolled it into a kindlier ether for those of its children who bore the hidden treasure and the burden of rare gifts.

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THE PHANTOM SOLDIER AT TICONDEROGA

"Farewell, Inverawe. We shall meet at Ticonderoga."

Heading by Joseph Eberle

DURING the long war between the French and the British for the possession of North America, one of the last battles fought, in 1758, just before the fall of Quebec to Wolfe's army in 1759, was that of Ticonderoga, or Carillon as it is known to the French. The fort at Ticonderoga guarded the entrance to Lake Champlain and was thus a possession of very great importance. It was the gateway to Canada from the south and each army set great store upon it. After the loss of Louisburg and Fort du Quesne—the present Pittsburgh—it was indeed, with the exception of Quebec, the last great stronghold of the French in the New World.

ON A HOT July day, fifteen thousand British troops under General Abercrombie attacked Ticonderoga, at that time held by less than four thousand French and Indians. The battle lasted for six hours; and notwithstanding the great difference in numbers, the French repulsed the attack with great slaughter of the British. In the defeat of the British a phantom soldier, tradition says, had a large share, for the reported apparition brought gloom and terror to the British troops; they undertook the attack with little heart for battle and with small hope of success.

The main division of the attacking British force was a Highland Regiment commanded by a Scottish major. The Highlanders had always been brave in combat, but in this famous Regiment on that day of battle the usual courage was lacking. The drooping spirits of the Highlanders were not without good cause. The cause was the phantom soldier.

The Major's old home was the ancient castle of Inverawe in the midst of the West Highlands of Scotland. Many years before he came to America to serve in the war for

Britain, one evening as he sat alone in the old hall, he had heard a loud knocking at the castle gate. When he had opened the gate in answer to the knocking, he had been met by a stranger in torn plaid and jacket and travel-stained kilts. The stranger was weary from much running. "I have killed a soldier in a fray," he had gasped; "his friends and kinsmen are following me, and are now close upon me; I pray you, give me refuge." The Major had admitted him to the castle and promised to protect him. "Swear it on your dirk," said the stranger, and he had swore. Now, to swear on one's dirk or sword was an oath sacred and binding among soldiers and the fugitive knew that he was safe.

The Major had scarcely hidden the stranger in a secret recess of the castle when again there was a loud knocking at the gate. When he opened the gate he was met by two armed men who said, "Your cousin has been foully murdered; we are in pursuit of the murderer; we lost sight of him near the castle, and we thought that perhaps he might have sought your protection." The Major, although much grieved and angered by the news, was true to his oath, his soldier's oath sworn upon his dirk; he replied that no one had entered the castle that evening and that he had not seen the murderer. When the pursuing officers had gone on their way, the Major lay down to rest in a large dark room. After a brief time he fell asleep, but he had not slept long when he awoke in great fear. During his short slumber the ghost of his murdered cousin appeared to him, clad in his soldier's uniform, and looking at him sternly, said, "Inverawe, Inverawe, your kinsman's blood has been shed; shield not the murderer."

All night long the Major was troubled by the vision so that he slept but little. His kinsman bade him do one thing, his oath obligated him to do another, and he was much worried. In the morning he went to the guilty stranger, and told him he could protect him no longer in his home. "But you have sworn on your dirk to give me refuge," said the stranger; "remember, it was a soldier's oath." Finally, the Major agreed to hide him in a secret mountain cave some distance from the castle, and to send him food and drink daily. There, he assured him, he would be quite safe from his pursuers. And he thought that he himself would not again see the phantom soldier, since he no longer sheltered his kinsman's slayer under his roof. But that night while the Major slept, the ghost of his dead cousin again came back to him and gave him the same warning as on the previous night. Again, he was deeply troubled. That he might forever set at rest the spirit of his dead cousin, which would continue to walk the earth while the murder was unavenged, he decided to seize the murderer the next day and to give him up to the officers, who were still searching for him. In the morning he went to the cave to capture the stranger. The cave was empty; the murderer had fled in the darkness. That night while the Major slept, the phantom soldier again appeared to him; looking at him less sternly than before, he said, "Farewell, Inverawe, Farewell! We shall meet at Ticonderoga." Then he disappeared.

THE Major had never before heard the strange name, Ticonderoga. Years passed, but he was no longer troubled by the midnight visitor; indeed, the vision and the strange name were soon almost forgotten. Many important events crowded rapidly into the Major's life. He served in many wars in that era of unrest. At last he was sent with his regiment to America to assist in the defeat of the French forces fighting with the British for the possession of Canada.

At that time the British were bent on the capture of Quebec, the last great French stronghold in Canada. But first, Ticonderoga had to fall. When the Major heard this fort spoken of and plans being made for its capture, he remembered, not without misgivings, we may be sure, the strange warning of his phantom cousin, given to him many years before. He told the story one night to his brother officers as they lingered late in his tent, and the story soon spread.

At last the order was given to move north towards Quebec and to take on the way Ticonderoga. The Major's officers, who knew the country better than he, fearing for his peace of mind, decided to tell him when they reached Ticonderoga that they were not yet near it, and that it lay much farther

north. And so when they reached Ticonderoga after some days of hard marching, they told him that they were now at Fort George; and he, not knowing the new and unfamiliar country, was easily deceived. On the night of their arrival, however, while the Major slept after midnight, the phantom soldier appeared to him again after many years, and, bending over him, said, "Inverawe, Inverawe, this is Ticonderoga!" In the morning, the Major met his officers with a troubled face. He told them of the vision of the night. "You have lied to me," he said; "a phantom soldier, my murdered cousin, came to my tent last night; this is Ticonderoga, and I shall die as a result of today's battle." Soon the story spread throughout the camp. The British believed that with their superior numbers they could easily capture the fort. But the Highlanders, fearing for their leader, were in low spirits; they began the attack in gloom and silence and shadowy foreboding and had little heart for battle. After six hours of fighting the attacking British force was driven back with serious loss, and the French held the fort.

As the phantom soldier had warned, the Major was mortally wounded while leading his dispirited troops in the attack. After some days he died from his wounds. On the night of the day of battle his younger brother at home in Scotland saw in his slumber a vision of the Major, who clad in his Commander's uniform, bent over his bed and kissed him; and because of the story he had heard of his phantom cousin, he knew that at last in far away America, the prophecy had been fulfilled and that Death had come to his soldier brother. The Major was buried by his men, near Fort Edward, not far from the place of his death. There on a small slab you can still read the faded inscription: "Here lies the body of Inverawe, Major of the old Highland Regiment, aged fifty-five years, who died on the 17th of July, 1758, of the wounds he received in the attack of the Retrenchment of Ticonderoga or Carillon on the 8th of July, 1758."

And in remote parts it is still believed that the defeat of the British at Ticonderoga was caused by the phantom soldier who sought vengeance for his death.

Mists rose from the lake . . . some in human, others in goblin-like forms.

I Can't Wear White

BY SUZANNE PICKETT

I DIDN'T believe it of course. It COULDN'T be true. Nevertheless—I glanced in the mirror. My dress was white and soft, as near like the description Dereck had given me as I could make it.

He was honest at least. Better to have told me than for me to go through life wondering—But things like that don't really happen. It was a dream, a fixation. Dereck is the poetic type, one who WOULD imagine something like that.

Well, *I* wasn't poetic and I didn't intend to let something he had imagined spoil my whole life.

"She had the biggest, darkest eyes," he said when he first began the story. I widened my own eyes. They were big and dark too. I knew what they could do to a man, and this time I was playing for keeps.

Dereck reached out and covered my eyes with his hand. "They are like hers," he said. "Exactly." Then he kissed me gently and began the story.

"I know you won't believe it," he said. "It's incredible even to me. Nevertheless, it's true. You couldn't imagine a thing like that once a year for five years could you?"

He had uncovered my eyes and I turned

Heading by Virgil Finlay

on all the voltage as I looked at him, but his eyes were on his hands in his lap as he went on. "I certainly wasn't thinking of anything like that," he said. "I was coming home from a baseball game. It was Labor Day, had been terrifically hot all day, but the night was cool, and I was as sober as I have ever been in my life.

"There had been such a crowd at the ball park, it took me an hour to get my car out and start home. It was just twelve as I came to the lake. You know, the bridge is long and narrow. I didn't see a car at the other end, but I slowed down anyhow. Several people had been killed on that same bridge, so I wasn't taking any chances.

"Just as I started to pick up speed, a girl in a white dress stepped in front of the car. I swore softly and jammed on the brakes. 'What the—' I began. Then I saw her face. It was the sweetest thing. Little, like yours," his hand caressed my cheek. "With the clearest white skin, and big, dark eyes."

" 'I—' her voice had a soft, breathless quality. 'I'm—I've had an accident. I wonder if you could take me home.'

" 'Anyone with you?' I asked. 'Anyone hurt?'

" 'Oh no!' she said quickly. 'I'm alone. But I've GOT to get home. Daddy will have a fit.'

" 'Where do you live?' I asked. I had known her about two minutes, but already I would have tried to take her to the moon if she had wanted to go there.

"She gave me the address, I opened the door and she stepped into the car."

Dereck paused a minute and smiled. My fingers ached to slap that look out of his eyes, but I kept them quietly folded in my lap. "She was so—sweet, so beautiful," Dereck went on. "I knew before I had driven a mile that I loved her. There was a sort of luminous quality about her. She had on a soft, white dress that clung to her. Some kind of filmy material," he grinned. "I never did know much about such things."

"Her fingers were little and pink, like yours." He took one of my hands. I unclenched it and let it lie, little and soft and pink in his. He rubbed the fingers and continued his story.

I hadn't spoken since he began. I knew if I opened my mouth I might do anything from screaming to sniveling and begging. And whoever this girl was, she didn't sound as if SHE would do anything like that.

SO I managed to listen quietly as Dereck went on. "I wanted to drive slowly. To never get home for that matter, but she was agitated, her face tense. 'Hurry!' she said over and over. 'Please hurry.' When I began to drive faster, she relaxed, lay back in the seat and smiled quietly.

"But she didn't have much to say and somehow, I couldn't think of anything either. But it didn't matter. She wasn't married, I learned that much. And I had the rest of my life to see her—to get acquainted."

Dereck paused, sighed and was silent awhile. "And then?" I managed to get past my lips without opening them too wide. My throat ached and my eyes filled as I tried to keep the tears from falling. This couldn't be Dereck sitting here and telling me there was another girl. It just COULDN'T be. Derek loved ME. I knew he did. He hadn't looked at anyone else since we started going together. This COULDN'T happen to me.

But it WAS happening. I couldn't bear this, yet I must bear it. This sudden pain in my chest. This sickness that swooped over me; and I must sit silently, listen sympathetically while Dereck tore my life into shreds.

I swallowed, Dereck bit his lips, then opened them to continue. "We finally came to the address she had given me. It was a big, old white house set back among some ancient oaks. A light burned at the front, another dim light shone from the inside.

"I hadn't dared touch her though I wanted to. But she seemed always about to run away, and I held my hands on the steering wheel now, gripped them to keep them there as I said, 'I'll see you again?'

"She hesitated, gave me a queer look, then said in a low voice. 'Yes, you'll see me again if you,—"She didn't finish the sentence. We both sat a minute in silence, then the front door of the house opened.

"I hurried to open my own door, stepped out and around to the other side of the car. I certainly didn't want her father to have a 'fit' the first time I brought Opal home.

"I didn't know how she could have gotten out of the car so quietly, and without me seeing her; but when I opened the door on her side she wasn't there. I was a little vexed at her, then I smiled. She was afraid of course. She had seen that it was her father who was at the door and she had slipped out of the car.

"But the man still stood in the door and his face, in the dim light, had the saddest look I have ever seen. I started up the walk. At least I would speak with him, get his permission to call on Opal. I must have looked worried, for he tried to smile as I came up the steps. But the smile was worse than the other look.

"How are you, son?" he asked. I was eighteen then, and thought myself very much a man, so I didn't like the 'son,' but I smiled back as best I could. I certainly wanted to do everything I could to make him like me; especially as I expected to have him for a father in law some day.

"But his next words staggered me. 'I've been looking for you,' he said.

"What—' I began. 'I mean, I'm sorry but—'

"I know,' he said. 'I've never seen you before, and you don't know me.'

"That's right,' I admitted. And suddenly, I was afraid for him to go on. I didn't want to hear what he had to say, but I stood numbly, waiting for him to speak.

"You picked my daughter Opal up at the bridge and brought her home, didn't you?"

"How on earth could he know that? I thought as I nodded.

" 'When you opened the door for her, she was gone wasn't she?' His eyes were kind, yet with a haunted look.

"Yes," I said. "But how—"

"Opal was killed there on Labor Day night, five years ago," he said quietly.

"If he had exploded a bomb under my feet I couldn't have been more shocked. 'No!' I managed to say at last. 'No! It's impossible! She's as much alive as you or I.'

" 'I understand son,' he said and his voice choked. 'But I can't understand why—WHY. She's all that I had and she loved me. She never—' He caught himself, swayed against the door. 'She was hurrying to get home, she knew I'd be worried. Someone has brought her home every Labor Day night since then. Oh God!' he groaned then and put his hands to his face. 'Why can't she rest? Why must she keep trying to come home? Doesn't she know that I understand?'

"As I turned blindly and hurried back to the car I heard him pleading with her. 'Come in darling. Daddy isn't mad at you. Please come in, Opal.' "

Dereck paused again, then hurried on. "I don't know what I did the rest of the night. But the next day I managed to get home somehow. I was sick for two weeks. Mother told me I babbled and pleaded about some ghost that inhabited my dreams. She wanted to keep me at home that year. I had already made arrangements to enter the University; but I persuaded her that I was able to go.

"You know the rest; or most of it. I changed after that, was quieter, studied more and kept to myself. That's when I began writing; how I had time to write two novels and still keep ahead of my class in all of my studies.

"As you know, I never looked at another girl until I met you. Every year since then, I have met her again, taken her home—"

He took my hand and kissed it. "You are so like her," his voice was husky. "Sometimes I wonder if you are not a dream."

"I am no dream," I told him positively. "And I certainly don't intend to disappear."

"No," he smiled at me. "No, you're no dream except as a girl is everything a man can dream about. I love you Angela, YOU!" He kissed me fiercely. "And no girl who has been—" he hesitated, then went on, "has been dead for ten years can come between us. But," he stopped again. "I have to be sure—to see her once more or she might always be there—between us—and—You understand." He looked at me pleadingly.

"Yes, Dereck," I leaned my face against his. "Yes, darling, I understand."

THAT happened last night, Sunday night. Today is Labor Day.

Of course he imagined it all. After all, Dereck IS a writer; "The most imaginative writer of our era," critics say, so he has a right to imagine a dream girl if he wishes. Glad that he did. If he hadn't he might have

married someone else before he met me. And I'm glad this dream girl looks like me. I don't believe it of course, but nevertheless—

My young brother Henry is a sweet kid. We've kept quite a few things from mother and dad in our day. I can always depend on him when I need him. So he didn't ask a single question when I wanted him to drive me to the lake and leave me about eleven o'clock on Labor Day night. I did tell him it was a joke, and that Dereck was to pick me up there.

I knew, too, that Dereck would be at the lake bridge at exactly twelve o'clock, so I wasn't taking any chances there either. I had slipped a quart of water in his gas tank. It should give him enough trouble to make him a few minutes late. If the girl DID show up, I'd get rid of her somehow; and I'd be the one Dereck carried home. I had a black raincoat around me so that other cars wouldn't see me and stop as I hid behind a post on the bridge.

I was glad I had on the coat. It made me feel sort of protected, and kept the chill which came out of the lake from making me too uncomfortable.

I huddled behind the post, shivered and wished that I was at home. I hadn't dreamed that I would be so scared. The night was dark, silent, oppressive. Mists rose from the lake in eerie wraiths, some in human, others in goblin like forms. It didn't take even a writer's imagination to people the bridge with ghosts. No wonder Dereck had been fooled.

But I DID wish he would hurry. This was a lonely road, and no other cars passed. If one had, I think I would have thumbed a ride home if the driver had stopped.

An owl hooted suddenly behind me; made me jump in terror. A night hawk swooped after an insect or something. Occasional plunking noises came from the lake as a frog or fish jumped in the murky depths. I had never been so lonely in my life. I seemed glued to the post, as if I would be there through eternity as if—

I think I must have fainted briefly.

I found myself lying on the planks babbling quietly that I hadn't really seen a girl in white step onto the bridge; that it was just another wraith from the lake, that I was as crazy as Dereck .

But I knew that I was lying. That I HAD seen the girl.

I opened my eyes, sat up and stared as I heard a car. But it wasn't Dereck's car. The sound of the motor told me that. "Thank God he's late," I whispered, and almost fainted again as I peered at the girl who stood in the headlights of the car.

She WAS the loveliest thing I had ever seen. No wonder Dereck couldn't forget her. If I were half as pretty as that to him—

The car stopped. "Opal!" a hoarse voice cried and a man leaped from the car to take the girl in his arms.

"Daddy!" she cried and ran to him. "Daddy, I've waited for you all of these years." I saw them enter the car, and I was choking. I couldn't breathe.

As the car backed up to turn around, I flung the black raincoat from me, tried to run from the bridge, but I was falling—falling—

It might have been thirty minutes later, Dereck said he was that late; that it was twelve-thirty, so it must have been that long —that I came to in his arms. He was crying and kissing me.

"Don't let it be Angela, God" he sobbed. She's alive. She's GOT to be alive. Angela, speak to me."

"Dereck," I whispered and tried to raise my arms.

"Thank God!" he said. "You're not dead. "Angela," he said fearfully. "I was afraid for a minute that you were Opal. I was afraid that I had dreamed YOU."

"Are you glad?" I asked. "Or do you wish that she had met you?"

"Glad!" he kissed me again. "When I found you and thought you were dead—"

WELL, we went to Mississippi that night and were married. I called mother next day and told her, then asked for Henry.

He promised to hide all of the papers for the next week and save them for me.

Dereck and I bought clothes as we needed them, drove on to the coast and spent two wonderful weeks in California. We liked it so well that we moved out here a month later/ We have only been home once since

then. That was the last of August, almost a year later.

Dereck didn't want to do it at first, but I finally persuaded him to visit the bridge with me on Labor Day night. We took a blanket and huddled behind the post that had hidden me a year before. But I wasn't afraid this time. The night noises were friendly, and the mists, only beautiful vapors from which one might spin dreams.

We stayed until three o'clock. An occasional car passed, but no girl in white.

A little after three we drove home. "You'll never believe it," Dereck told me that night. "But Angela, I honestly did see the girl."

"You still think that she was real?" I asked.

"I don't THINK, I KNOW that she was real," he told me.

"Does it matter?" I asked.

"She hasn't really mattered since the first time I saw you." he said, and his kiss left no doubt of that.

"But I wonder," he said later. "I wonder why she quit coming."

I had the clipping with me. I had never been able to throw it away. I slipped it from the pages of my bank book and handed it to him. It read:

FATHER KEEPS RENDEZVOUS WITH DAUGHTER.

Car runs off bridge. Father of Opal Fenton drowns in same spot where his daughter was drowned ten years ago. Many think it was suicide. He had brooded over the death of Opal for years, talked of her to his neighbors as if she were still alive.

Others think it was an accident, but this reporter wonders. There seems to be too many coincidences. The accident happened at the same place, the lake bridge, the same night, Labor Day, and the same hour, midnight, according to the coroner's report.

Whatever it was, suicide or accident; it seems touching and fitting that these two; father and daughter, who, according to report, loved each other with more than ordinary love: are together at last.

Dereck was silent awhile after he read the clipping, then his voice was gentle as he turned to me. You knew?" he said. "You knew?

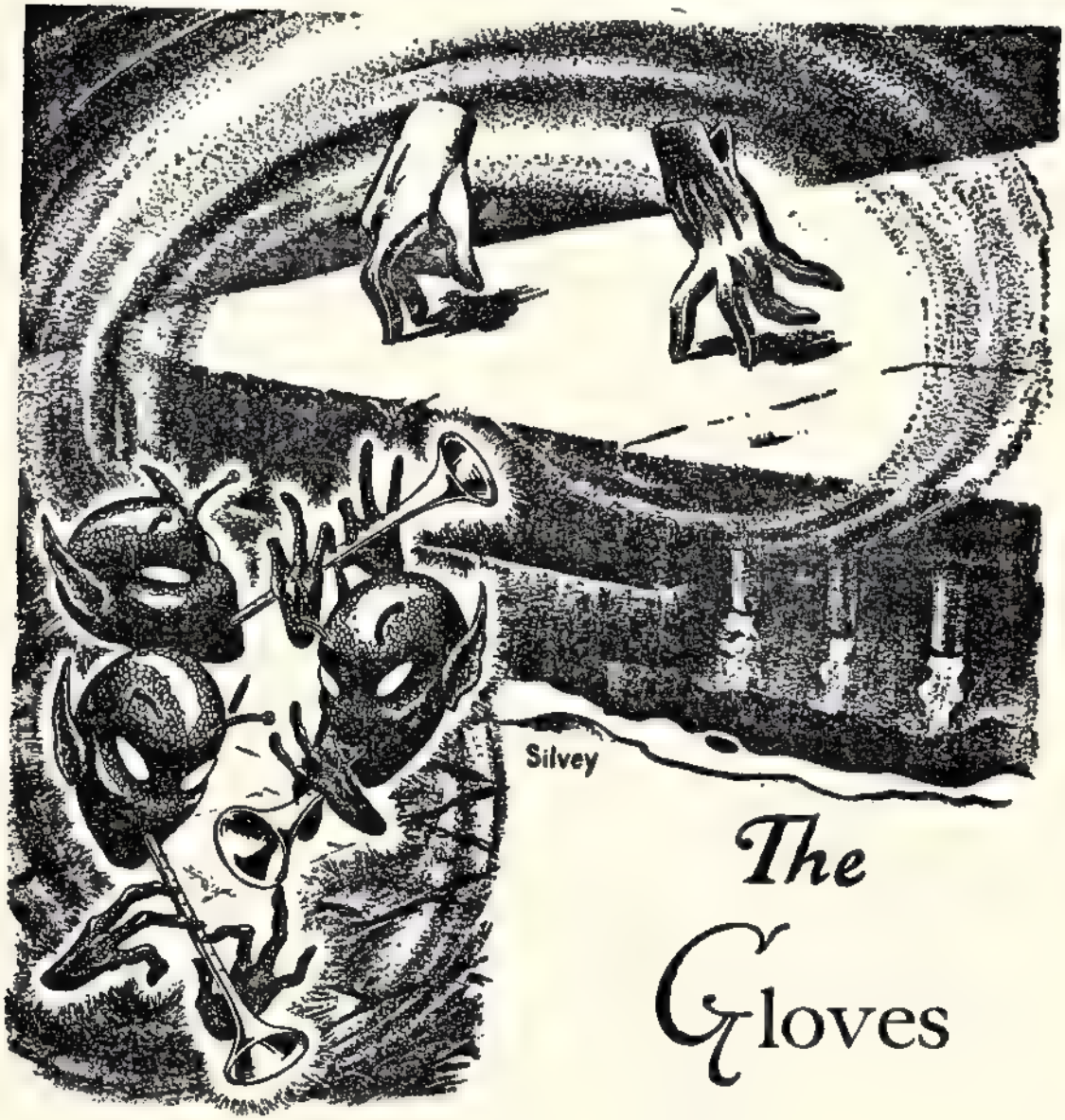
"Yes," I whispered.

He took out his lighter, flicked it, held the clipping in the flame, then crushed it in an ash tray. "It's over now," he said. "Finished. Let's never think of it again."

I agreed. But sometimes I wonder. With my dark eyes and fair skin, white is my most becoming color, but Dereck will never let me wear it. I bought a white dress once.

And anyhow, I don't blame Dereck. You see—I can't forget her myself.

the scrabbling in the walls could have been rats, of course . . .



The Gloves

BY GARNETT RADCLIFFE

I HADN'T gone into Mr. Robinson's shop to buy gloves. I had gone in hoping to find among the miscellany of junk that filled the place literally from floor to ceiling a bracket for a shaving cabinet, and I was poking about when the gloves caught my eye. They were on a chair near the door, and I did not at once realize that they were for sale.

"One of your customers has left his gloves behind," I told Mr. Robinson. "You'd better put them somewhere safe for he may come back for them."

Mr. Robinson, who is middle-aged and

Heading by W. H. Silvey

worried looking, clicked his tongue—a sign of annoyance.

"I'd have sworn I put 'em away," he said. "Gettin' absent-minded in my old age, that's what I am. No, they haven't been left behind. I gave that ferrity-faced loafer Joe Larkin ten bob for them the other day. 'Spect he pinched 'em, but that's not my business. . . . You feel the quality. . . . Real hogskin, those gloves are."

I examined them. They were genuine hogskin with a wool lining, and they had been very little worn.

"How much?" I asked.

"Twelve and six to you," Mr. Robinson said. "They're a bargain. Last you a lifetime those will!"

As it happened I needed a pair of gloves, having left my own much inferior ones on a bus a few days before. When I'd tried them on and found they fitted perfectly the chance of obtaining a first-class article at a very moderate price overcame my dislike of second-hand goods.

"Twelve and six it is," I said.

When I'd returned to the bachelor flat I was renting in that beehive called Harbinger Mansions I examined my purchase again. Yes, they were excellent gloves and practically unsoiled except just inside each wrist where both wool linings had a ring of faint, brownish stains. I told myself no one would ever notice that and put them away in the top left-hand drawer of my chest of drawers.

I don't keep a diary, nor have I a very retentive memory. When I say it was about a week later that the first incident in connection with those gloves occurred I am merely hazarding a guess.

It was such a trivial incident that at the time it hardly registered itself on my mind. It was only when subsequent happenings induced me to look back that I recalled it as being the first of a chain of rather curious events.

ALL that happened was that the gloves seemed to have moved themselves inside the drawer. When I went to take them out—it was a cold, wet morning most appropriate for the wearing of wool-lined, hogskin gloves—they were not stretched on a collar-box as I distinctly remembered having left them. They were on top of some socks in the front portion of the drawer, and the fingers were curled into the palms so that they looked like a pair of clenched fists.

Of course there was an obvious explanation. Mrs. Hubbard, the amiable lady who "did out" my flat during my absence must have been doing a bit of prying. She'd noticed the gloves, had taken them out to try them on her own fat hands and had omitted to replace them as she'd found them.

I decided I'd say nothing to Mrs. Hubbard. She was a good old soul whose services I wouldn't have risked losing for half-a-dozen pairs of gloves.

I wore the gloves that day with satisfaction. They were warm and comfortable and they looked good. A gentleman's gloves, I flattered myself. Gloves are great conveyors of personality, and I could picture their previous owner—their real owner I mean, not the ferrity-faced Mr. Larkin who had sold them to Mr. Robinson—as having been the old-fashioned country squire type who appreciated good leather, sound horses and vintage port. It may seem ridiculous to deduce all that from a pair of gloves, but when I looked at these with their hallmark of quality and faint indentations on the palms as if they had once gripped reins, that was the very vivid impression I got.

When I got back that night they were too wet to be replaced in the drawer, so I put them on the back of a chair within reasonable distance of the radiator.

And so came incident No. 2. which can be just as easily explained away as the first. Presumably, I hadn't balanced them very well on the chair, or they were disturbed by a draught, for in the morning I found they had fallen to the floor and rolled several feet away from the chair towards the window. Somehow when I saw them lying on the carpet, backs uppermost and fingers spread out and slightly curved, I was put in mind of a man crawling on his face.

The impression was so strong I disliked picking them up. They still felt a little damp and—presumably because of the radiator—warm as if they had recently been worn.

After that there was a spell of fine

weather during which I had no occasion to wear or to think of gloves. I'd quite forgotten them when one evening when I was asking for my letters the hall porter gave me a message.

"Mrs. Hubbard, the lady who does your flat, thinks you've got mice, sir," he said. "If you've no objection I'll arrange for a trap to be left in the bedroom."

MICE are not to be tolerated in a hive for humans such as Harbinger Mansions. I told the porter I thought a trap would be an excellent idea. That evening it was the first thing I saw when I entered my bedroom. Probably on the advice of Mrs. Hubbard it had been placed close to the chest of drawers.

That night I heard the mice myself. From the sounds they made they were robust mice. Lying awake and furious, I could picture a couple of large rats romping about inside the chest of drawers. A rat hunt in pyjamas and bare feet didn't appeal to me, so I pulled the sheets round my head and eventually, despite the scrabbling, scratching sounds, I fell asleep.

Next morning the trap was empty. I looked in the chest of drawers. Only the top left-hand drawer had been disturbed. In there the rats had worked havoc. Handkerchiefs, socks and collars had been flung about and mixed as if by a rake, and the paper which lined the bottom of the drawer had been scraped up and torn. I found the gloves almost hidden beneath the paper. I put the drawer to rights and went out cursing all rats.

The following night was very similar, except that the rats were even more frisky. After listening to the scrabbling, bumping sounds for a couple of hours, I sprang out of bed in desperation and yanked open the drawer whence the sounds seemed to come.

The contents had been disturbed and flung about, but no sign of a rat. I returned to bed leaving the drawer open. I must have scared the rats for silence followed. As I was dropping off to sleep I thought I heard a soft flop, flop, as if the intruders had hopped from the drawer on the carpet, but I was too weary to get up again.

"Git, you brutes!" I hissed, and I turned deeper into the pillow.

I didn't sleep as well that night as I usually do. Several times I half-woke to hear the rats scampering about the room, and once I'd an unpleasant nightmare in which a pair of soft, flabby hands seemed to be groping round my face and neck. My last recollection is of a sound of drumming at the window as if someone were tapping on the glass with his fingers.

IN the morning I found the rats had pulled the gloves out of the drawer. After a search I found them beneath the chest of drawers whence I had to retrieve them with the crook of my umbrella. They were dusty and crumpled, so that they looked like a couple of dead crabs. Somehow I disliked handling them.

I wasn't going to suffer another such night. After I'd put my drawer straight I went down and spoke my mind to the hall porter.

If he could not get rid of the rats, I threatened I would leave Harbinger Mansions.

He promised strong measures. In the evening I found a second trap had been installed and poisoned bait had been left in strategic points. Hoping for the best I went to bed early.

I slept badly and had a dream in which I saw a finger beckoning to me from the top of the chest of drawers. Then I dropped off only to be woken a little later by the sound of my door opening as if someone had given it a violent jerk. I sat up. Sure enough the door opening on the corridor was open. I could see the dim blue light which always burns in the corridor and I could feel a cold draught.

Cursing and rather scared I got out of bed, trying to assure myself I hadn't closed the door firmly and the draught had blown it open. As I was about to close it I heard a frightened yell from the direction of the main stairway.

I hurried down the dim corridor fearful of seeing I knew not what. On the landing a figure cowered against the wall. It was one of the night-porters, an elderly individual with a bibulous countenance and a ragged

white mustacthe. As he pointed down the stairs his hand shook, and his face was ashen.

"Spiders!" he gasped. "A couple of whopping great brown spiders! Gawd, am I seein' things?"

I told him that what he'd imagined to be spiders were in all probability the rats that had been haunting my bedroom. After a bit I persuaded him to accompany me down the main stairway to the entrance hall where we turned on lights and peered under chairs and sofas. There were no rats to be seen. I told the porter that what Harbinger Mansions needed was a good fox-terrier.

"They *were* spiders," he insisted. "Rats don't run like this," and he illustrated what he meant by making his hands dart along the counter at the inquiry desk, the fingers moving very quickly so that they looked like the legs of running spiders. I wish he hadn't done that, for later on I had yet another creepy dream in which I was following a pair of hands that scuttled like crabs along wet streets and roads until they reached a dirty little house with no lights where they groped up the wall and vanished through a broken window into a dark room. I seemed to hear then a scream like the hoot of a railway engine and I woke up sweating and trembling.

But at least the rats had left my room, never to return again. Apparently they'd either eaten the gloves or dragged them off with them for nesting purposes, for although I searched high and low they were nowhere to be found.

AND is that the end of the story? Well, on that point I'd rather not offer an opinion. But I will relate something that some readers may think casts a light on what happened in my flat.

The facts came to me through the mouth of Mr. Robinson. I was poking about in his shop after my wont when he asked me if I still had the gloves I'd bought.

"They've vanished," I said, which was nearer the truth than if I'd just said I'd lost them.

"Vanished, eh?" said Mr. Robinson. "Well, the fellow who sold them to me, that ferrity wastrel Joe Larken, has vanished too! Leastways, he's dead. He's been found strangled in his bed in that old condemned house of his by the Minchley railway line."

"Strangled?" I repeated.

"Yes, strangled," said Mr. Robinson. "And the police haven't a clue who did it. The murderer wore gloves and he didn't leave a trace. What beats the police is how he got into the house with all the doors and windows fastened. They say he didn't leave so much as a footprint in the dust. . . . Anyway Joe Larkin was no loss. . . . Do you know where I believe he got the gloves I sold you?"

"Where?" I asked.

"You remember the crash on the Minchley line when the London express collided with a goods train? It happened in the cutting just below Joe's house. He was there all right, but I bet he didn't waste time helping people out of the wreckage. Loot—that would be Joe's game. . . .

"I could just see him creeping round the burning coaches like the human rat he was. . . . He'd have pinched the wallet off a dying man . . . or the shoes off a dead baby! I bet that's where he found those gloves."

That was what Mr. Robinson told me. Later, curiosity caused me to go to a public library where I could read the back numbers of the papers reporting the Minchley crash. Among the list of the killed I remarked the name of a certain Colonel Belcher-Price, an ex-Hussar and M.F.H. of the Minchley Hunt. It stated in the paper that he'd had both hands severed at the wrist when his first-class carriage was telescoped by a goods truck.

I'll leave the reader to draw his or her own conclusions. . . .

Heading by Frank Kelly Freas

The Werewolf of Ponkert

BY H. WARNER MUNN

They are neither brute nor human—
They are neither man nor woman—
They are Ghouls.
POE: THE BELLS.

PROLOGUE

IN THE past, when I toured in France, invariably I made a point of never failing to stop at a certain tavern, about thirty miles from Paris. I will not give you more definite directions for reaching it, for it was a discovery of my own and as such I would share it with no one. The fact that the inn has very pretty serving maids is but incidental, the real reason of my visits being the superlative excellence of the wine.

Many a night have I and the old Pierre sat, smoked and drunk till the wee hours of the morning, and many have been the experiences we have exchanged of wild, eery adventure in various parts of the globe. Pierre also was a great traveler and seeker after adventure before he drifted into the backwater of this placid village, to finish there the remainder of his days.

One night (or morning I should say), Pierre grew indiscreet under the influence

of his nectar, and let fall a few words so pregnant of possibilities that I scented a mystery at once; and when he was sober I demanded an explanation. And, having said so much, seeing that he could not dissuade me, he brought forth proof of his dark hints in regard to a horrible occurrence in the annals of his family.

The proof was a book, bound in hand-tooled leather and locked by a silver clasp. When open it proved to be written in a crabbed hand in old Latin on what was apparently parchment, which was now yellow with age, but must when new have been remarkably white.

It comprised only four leaves, each a foot square and glued or cemented to a thin wooden backing. They were written on only one side and completely covered with this close, crabbed Latin.

On the back of the book were two iron staples, and hanging from each, several links of heavy rusted chain. Evidently, like most valuable books which were available to the public in the past, it had been chained fast to prevent theft.

Unfortunately, I cannot read Latin, or in fact any languages but French and English, although I speak several. So it was necessary for my friend to read it to me, which he did.

After I had recovered from the numbness which the curious narrative had thrown over me, I begged him to read it again—slowly. As he read, I copied; and here is the tale for you to judge and believe as you see fit. Told in Hungarian, transcribed in Latin, translated into modern French and from that into English, it is probably both garbled and improved. No doubt anachronisms abound, but be that as it may, it remains without dispute the only authentic document known of a werewolf's experiences, dictated by himself.

I

HAVING but a few hours in which to live, I dictate that which follows, hoping that someone thereby may be warned by my example and profit by it. The priest has told me to tell my story to him and he will write it down. Later it will be written down again, but I do not care to think of that now.

My name is Wladislaw Brenryk. For twenty years I lived in the village where I was born, a small place in the northeastern part of Hungary. My parents were poor and I had to work hard—harder, in fact, than I liked, for I was born of a languid disposition. So I used my wits to save my hands, and I was clever, if I do say it myself. I was born for trading and bargaining, and none of the boys I grew to manhood with could beat me in a trade.

Time went on, and before I had reached manhood my father died in a pestilence. Although my mother was pestilence-salted (for she had the plague when she was a girl and recovered), she soon gave up, grew weaker and weaker, finally joining my father in the skies. The priest of our village said that is was the trouble in her lungs that killed her, but I know better, for they had loved each other much.

Alone and lorn for the first time in my life, I could not bear to remain longer amongst the scenes of my happy boyhood. So on a fine spring morning I set forth, carrying on my back those possessions which I could not bring myself to part with, and around my waist a well-stuffed money belt, filled with the results of my trading and the sale of our cottage.

FOR several years I wandered here and there, horse-trading for a time, then again a peddler of jewelry and small articles. Finally I came to Ponkert, and started a small shop in which I sold beautiful silks, jewels and sword hilts. It was the sword hilts that sold the best. They were highly decorated with golden filligree and encrusted with precious stones. Chiefs and moneyed nobles would come or send messengers for many miles to obtain them. I gained a reputation for honesty and fair dealing, likewise a less enviable notoriety for being a miser. It is true that I was careful and cautious, but I defy anyone to prove that I was parsimonious.

I had closed up the shop for the night and harnessed the horses for the long drive home, when for the first time I wished that I lived in the village instead of being so far away. I had always enjoyed the ride before; a man can think much in a ten mile ride and it gave

an opportunity to clean my mind of the day's worries and bickering, so as to come to my dear wife and little daughter with thoughts of only them.

What made me look forward with anxiety to the long ride home that particular day was the many broad gold pieces secreted in my wallet. I had never been molested on that road, but others had been found robbed and partly devoured, with tracks of both man and beast about them in the snow. Obviously, thought I at the time, thieves had beaten them down, leaving them for the wolves.

But there was a disturbing factor in the problem: not only were the bodies horribly mutilated and the beast tracks about them extraordinarily large for wolf tracks, but the feet of the men were unprotected by any covering whatever! Barefooted men roaming through the forests, in the snow, on the slim likelihood of discovering prey which could be forced to yield wealth! The very idea was improbable. If I had only known then what I know now, my entire life might have been changed, but it was not so to be.

To return to my story: It was known that I had a large amount of money in my possession, for that afternoon the chief of a large Tartar caravan, which was passing through, had stopped at my shop and taken six of my best sword hilts with him, leaving their equivalent in gold. So I had cause enough to worry. I looked about for some sort of weapon, and found a short iron bar, which I tucked beneath the robes of the sleigh; then I spoke to the mares, and we were off on the long ride home.

For a long time we went creaking along, the sleigh runners squeaking on the well-packed snow. Frost was in the air, and the stars gleamed down coldly upon the dark forest, hardly lighting the road. As yet the moon had not risen.

I turned from the main traveled highway and took the river road. This left the forest behind, but the traveling was much worse. Exposed to the winds, the light snowfall of the morning had drifted, and the roadway was choked. I thought of leaving the road and taking to the smooth surface of the river which gleamed brightly to the left, but this

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would have meant a mile or more extra to travel, for the river curved in a great bend opposite our home, and there was an impassable barrier of small trees and brush for some distance.

The moon was now rising over the hill I had just quitted, and as the beams struck upon me, I was suddenly seized by a fit of the most unaccountable terror. This peculiar feeling held me rigid in my seat. It seemed as if a hand of ice had been suddenly laid upon the back of my neck.

The mares, it was evident, had felt this strange thrill also, for they imperceptibly increased their speed without urging of mine. Indeed, I could not have moved a muscle while that spell was upon me.

Soon we dipped down into the hollow at the hill's foot, and the power that had frozen me was removed. A strange feeling of exaltation and happiness swept over me, as if I had escaped from some terrible and unthinkable danger.

"Hai!" I shouted, rising in the sleigh and cracking my whip.

The mares responded nobly and we started to climb the next hill. As we did so, a fiendish howling came down the wind, but faintly, as it were some distance away. I stopped the mares and stood up in the sleigh, the better to listen.

Faintly and far away sounded the cries, mellowed by distance. Then they grew louder and louder as the brutes came nearer, and over the top of the hill I had just quitted swept the devilish pack! They were on my trail, and it was only too plain that before I could reach home they would be upon me.

There was only one chance, and I took it. I clucked to the horses and turned them on to the ice of the river where lay a straight, smooth roadway. As long as the mares kept their feet, I was safe. But if one should stumble—!

THEN that same spell of horror threw its icy mantle over me again; I sagged back; the mares took the bit in their teeth; and we rushed like a thunderbolt down the river.

Little puffs of diamond dust shot from the ice into my lap, as the steelshod hoofs rang and clicked. On we tore, while I sat in the sleigh like a stone, unable to move a muscle. Faster and faster we rushed between the banks of brush that fringed the icy causeway.

Fainter re-echoed the demoniac ululations behind me, until at last they ceased altogether and the horses gradually slackened their furious pace.

Here the spell left me, nor did it ever come again. Now we traveled at a trot, which slowed until the mares were but walking along, their panting breath paling their dark heaving sides to gray, in the frosty air.

Then we rounded the bend, and I saw black, open water ahead. Here progress, perforce, ceased. There was no way out, except to turn back and mount the bank where less underbrush grew, then into the smooth plain beyond and homeward.

So I tugged at the rein, and we swerved half-way around. In that moment of unpreparedness, all became confusion.

A GLOATING chuckle sounded evilly from the farther bank, and five great gray shapes charged at me across the ice.

To think was to act with me. I have always been a creature of impulse, and almost instinctively, I turned back, slashing the mares till they reared and we plunged straight forward into the onrushing mass of bodies. This resolute move took the beasts by surprise and halted them. They scattered, and I was through, with a clear road before me. But my escape was not so to be accomplished.

Silently, from the shelter of an overhanging rock, trotted two more of the creatures; a very giant of a beast, gaunt and gray, beside which moved a small black one. Roaring, the gray flung himself at the horses, which reared and plunged in terror; and the rest were upon me from the rear.

Then, turmoil of battle, pandemonium of sound, through which cut like a knife the scream of a horse. One was down! I felt the sleigh lurch to one side; heavy bodies struck at me, sharp teeth tore; but I kept my balance until one, such was his velocity, struck me and laid me flat in the bottom of the sleigh, himself rebounding and shooting over the side.

Something offered itself to my hand, something cold and metallic. I raised my

arm, smote, felt steel bite bone, felt bone crunch beneath my stroke. I laid about me like a madman, with the bar, and cleared a space. I stood erect and waited for the attack.

But no instant attack followed. The menace of the bar was apparently too strong, and one by one they sank down on their haunches to rest or to wait. Jaws gaped wide and tongues lolled. Panting, they rested after the long run.

As I stood there in the sleigh, watching them, it seemed as if they were laughing, ghoul-like, at my horrible plight. As I soon found, they were!

I became conscious of a noise behind me, a small noise, such as the wind might make blowing a dead leaf across the bare ice; a sound like dead twigs rustling in the breeze, a faint scraping of claws, a padding of feet; and turning, I looked straight into the red glaring dots which were the eyes of the black wolf!

I shouted hoarsely, swung up the bar and brought it down with every ounce of force that I possessed. Unfortunately for myself, the beast, and Hungary, the great gray creature which ran at his side swerved and took the blow instead, squarely between the eyes.

He grunted, choked; a stream of blood shot from his mouth and nostrils. His eyelids opened and closed convulsively. Then he collapsed. The bar had crashed halfway through his head.

I whirled, expecting to be overwhelmed by the six that still lived, but to my intense surprise the surge of bodies that I had seen from the tail of my eye, when I struck at the black wolf, had subsided and they were now loping round and round the sleigh.

As they moved, the stricken mare followed them with her pain-filled eyes, while the one that was unharmed struggled constantly to be free. As the black leader passed me in the circling rout, I, likewise, slowly turned to keep him always in sight. Instinct told me that from him would come my greatest danger.

NOW I noticed a strange thing: about the necks of each of the five gray beasts there hung upon a thong a leathern pouch, about the size of a large fist. These pouches hung flat and flaccid as if they were empty. The black, examine as closely as I might, wore none.

Then, as with one accord, they stopped in their tracks, and sank on their haunches. That for which they had been waiting had at last occurred. There seemed to be some sort of a silent signal given. Simultaneously they lifted their heads and loosed a long, low wail, in which seemed to hang all the desolation and loneliness of eternity. Thereafter none moved or uttered a sound.

Everything was deathly still. Even the wind, which had been sporting in the undergrowth, had now faded into nothingness and died. Only the labored breathing of the two mares and the hoarse panting of the brutes were to be heard.

Little red eyes, swinish and glittering like hell-sparks, shone malevolently at me by the reflected light of the now fully risen moon.

In this unaccountable pause I had time to see the full beauty of the trap. As I have stated, the river formed a great blow, and while I was traveling on the curve between nock and nock, they had quitted the river and waited at the rapids, the line of their pursuit forming the string to the bow.

Also, for the first time, I could examine carefully and note what manner of beasts these were that held me in their power.

Far from being wolves, as my first thought had been, they were great gray animals, the size of a large hound, except the leader, who was black and more the size and shape of a true wolf. All, however, had the same general appearance, and the same characteristics. A high intelligent brow, beneath which gleamed little red piglike eyes, with a glint of a devil in their glance, which caused them to move with a rabbitlike lope when they ran; and most terrifying of all, they were almost hairless and possessed not the slightest rudiment of a tail!

THE circle was so arranged that as I stood, wary of possible attack, I could see four of the six. The smaller black creature was directly in front of me, tongue hanging out, apparently chuckling to himself in anticipation of some ghastly joke to follow.

Two were behind me, in whichever way I turned, but the night was so still that I could have heard them approaching long before they could have rushed me.

As I watched the creatures, I suddenly noticed that they were no longer glaring at me, but at something behind and beyond me and on the ground. I whirled, fearing a charge, but not a move anywhere in the circle had taken place.

So I glanced with the tail of my eye for a rush at my back, and set myself to solve the mystery.

There was nothing before me, on the bare ice, but here and there a white line extended across the river, caused by the snow drifting into cracks. Now I noticed that across one of these there lay, inside the circle, the dead body of the thing that I had slain with the bar. The four creatures which I could now see were watching this intently. I did likewise, with senses alert for treachery. I glanced from one end of the warped, twisted and broken thing, to the other. Somehow it seemed more symmetrical than before; longer in a way, and of a more human cast of feature.

Then—God! Shall I never forget that moment?

I looked at its right forepaw, or where its right forepaw should have been and was not. A white hairless hand had taken its place!

I screamed, hoarsely and horribly, grasped my bar firmly, leapt from the sleigh and rushed into the pack, which, risen, was waiting to receive me.

Everything from that moment until my arrival home in the morning is a blur. I remember a black figure, standing erect before me, burning eyes which fixed me like a statue of stone, a command to strip and a sharp stinging pain in the hollow of my elbow, where the great vein lies.

Then more dimly, I seem to recall a moment of intense anguish as if all my bones were being dislocated and re-set, a yelping, howling chorus of welcome, a swift rushing over ice on all fours, and a shrill sharp screaming, all such as only a horse in mortal fear can give!

Then there is a clear spot of recollection in which I was eating raw flesh and blood of my own mare, with snarling creatures like myself gorging all around me.

How I reached home, I have not the slightest idea, but the next that I remember is a warm room and my dear wife's face bending over mine. All after that, for nearly a week, was delirium, in which I raved incessantly, so they told me, of wolves which were not wolves, and a black fiend with eyes like embers.

II

WHEN I was well again I went to the scene of my adventure, but the ice had broken up in an early thaw; and only the swollen river rolled where I had been captured. At first, I thought that my half-remembered fancies were freakish memories, born of delirium, but one night in the early spring, as I lay in bed, only half asleep, something occurred which robbed me of this hope. I heard the long, melancholy wail of a wolf! Calling and appealing, it drew me to the window in hopes of seeing the midnight marauder, but nothing was visible as far as I could see, so I turned to go back to bed again. As I moved away from the window it came again, insistently calling. A powerful attraction drew me. I silently opened the window and melted into the darkness outside.

It was a warm spring evening as I padded silently along on bare feet, through the forest, drawn in a direction that led toward the thickest portion of the wood. I must have gone at least for half a mile under the influence of a strange exhilaration that had come over me, like that of a lover who keeps a tryst with his beloved.

Then the wailing cry echoed again, but with a shock I realized that there was no sound in the wood save the usual night noises. I realized the truth! The sound did not exist in reality, but I was hearing with the ears of the spirit rather than my fleshly ones. I suspected danger, but it was too late to turn back.

A figure rose to a standing posture, and I recognized the master, as he called himself, and we also, later. Under a power not my own, I stripped off my night garments, concealed them in a hollow tree which the

master showed me, and fell to the ground, a beast! The master had drunk my blood, and the old story that I had never quite believed, to the effect that if a vampire drinks one's blood, he or she has a power over that person that nothing can break and eventually he also will be a *wampyr*, was coming true.

We raced off into the night, were joined later by the other five, and paused for a time, in the forest. Here the master transformed himself, and I also. We stood there, and for the first time I heard the master's voice.

"Look well!" it croaked. "Look well! Welcome you to the pack this man?" (From the tone and actions I judged that he was speaking by rote, and using set phrases for the occasion.) Here there arose a howl of assent.

"Look well!" he said to me. "Look well! Do you wish to be one of these?" pointing to the pack. I covered my eyes with my hands and shrank back. "Think well," he spoke again, catching my bare shoulder with one talon, and mouthing into my ear.

"Will you join my band of free companions, or will you furnish them with a meal tonight?" I could imagine that a death's-head grin overspread his features at this, though my eyes were still blinded.

"You have a choice," he said. "We do not harm the poor, only the rich, although now and then we take a cow or horse from them, for that is our due. But the rich we slay, and their jewels and fine gold are ours. I take none myself, all belongs to my companions. What do you say?"

I cried "No!" as loudly as I could, and stared defiantly into his face. Over his shoulder I noted that the pack was gradually moving in, stealthily with eager leering looks.

"Ha!" he cackled, as I paled before that menace; "where now is your bravery? Make your choice. Die here and now, or make a promise to obey me unswervingly, to deviate not a jot from any orders, no matter what they may be, and be my willing slave. I will make you rich beyond your wildest dreams, your people shall wear sables and ermine, and the king himself will be proud to acknowledge you as friend. Come, what you say?" he asked.

I hesitated, temporizing. "Why do you single out me? I have never harmed you, do not even know you. There must be hundreds stronger than I and more willing, within easy reach. Why not use those you have or take someone else?"

"There must be seven in the pack," he answered simply. "You slew one, therefore must you take his place. It is but justice."

Justice! I laughed in his face. Justice, that a man fighting for his like should also perish if, slaying one of his enemies, he himself still lived!

My laughter infuriated him. "Enough delay!" he cried impatiently. "Come decide! Death or life. Which? Do you promise?"

What a terrible choice I was offered! A horrible death beneath fangs of beasts which should never have existed, with no one ever to know that I had resisted the temptation of proffered life; or an even more terrible existence as one of these unnatural things, half man, half demoniac beast! But if I chose death, I should have a highly problematical hope of future life in the skies, and my wife and daughter would be left alone.

IF I CHOSE life, I should have high adventure to season my prosaic existence; I should have wealth with which I could buy a title. Besides, something might happen to save me from the fate which otherwise would sometime inevitably overtake me. Is it any wonder to you, why I chose as I did? Would you not do the same, in my predicament? Even if I had it all to do over again, knowing what I now know, I think I should say again that which I answered the master: "I promise!"

But God, if I had only chosen death!

The things that I saw, heard, and did that night made a stain on my soul that all eternity will never erase. But finally they were over, and we separated, each returning to his home, and the master where no one knows.

I resumed my form by the tree, and as I did so, I remembered the events that had taken place that night. I fell prone on the grass, screaming, cursing, and sobbing, to

think of my fate to come. I was damned forever!

ALTHOUGH I have called myself a *wampyr,* I was not one in the true sense of the word, at the time of which I speak. Neither were any of the rest of my companions, except the master, for although we ate human flesh, drank blood, and cracked bones to extract the last particle of nourishment therefrom, we did so to assuage our fierce hunger more than because it was necessary for our continued existence.

We ate heartily of human food also, in the man form, but more and more we found it unsatisfying appetite, which only flesh and blood would conquer.

Gradually we were leaving even this for a diet consisting solely of blood. This, in my firm belief, was that which the master lived upon. His whole appearance bore this out. He was incredibly aged, and I believe an immortal. (He still may be, for no one has seen him dead, although they tell me that he is.)

His face was like a crinkled, seamed piece of time-worn parchment, coalblack with age. His eyes glittered with youth, seeming to have almost a separate existence of their own. Gradually, very gradually, the expressions of our faces were changing also, and we were turning into true *wampyrs* when self-brought catastrophe overtook us.

I will not dwell long upon the year or so in which I was the master's slave, for our dark and bloody deeds are too numerous to mention in detail. Some nights we wandered about in fruitless search and returned empty-handed, but usually we left death and destruction behind us. Most times, however, we would be summoned on some definite foray, which culminated in each of us being, the next day, somewhat richer.

We delighted in killing horses and cattle. We went blood-mad on these occasions, sometimes even leaving our original trail to take up an attractive scent of ox or cow. For these, I do not condemn myself, in so far as no human souls were destroyed in these slaughters, to become *wampyrs* after death. But as I think of those who are ruined forever because of me, I shudder at the thought!

On one occasion when we dragged down humans, my conscience has always rested easily. We had set out on the track of a sleigh, loaded with wealthy travelers from foreign parts; an old man and his two grandsons about three to five years of age. We followed for several miles to find the sleigh lying on its side, the horses gone, and the three travelers, stiff and stark on the dark stained snow, which was churned by many footprints of horse and man. Enraged, not by the murder (for we ourselves had intended no less), but by the loss of our anticipated loot, we took up the trail which led away toward the mountains. Five men on horseback made up the party. They spurred their horses to the utmost when we sang the Hunger Song, baying as we ran, but they were too slow for us. One by one, we pulled them down, slew the slayers and despoiled the thieves, which was a grim and ghastly jest.

But not often could I console myself thus. Many were the helpless and harmless that we removed from existence, and more horrible did we become. Day by day we were growing hardened and inured to our lot, and only rarely did my soul sicken as at my first metamorphosis. At one of these times, I crept into the village church. It was late at night, and except for myself the building was empty.

I KNELT at the altar and unburdened my soul. I confessed everything to the unhearing ears of the Greathearted One, abased myself and groveled on the floor. For hours it seemed, I prayed and begged that I might be given a sign, some small hope, that I should not be damned forever—No sign!

I cursed, screamed and prayed; for a time I must have been mad.

Finally I left. At the church door I bared my head and looked up at the sky across which dark clouds were scudding, obscuring the stars. I rose on tiptoe, shook my fist at the racing clouds, cursed God Himself and waited for the lightning stroke, but none came. Only a light rain started to

fall and I arrived home, drenched to the skin, with a heavier load on my heart than when I left.

Yet even then, so mysterious are the ways of an inscrutable Providence, my salvation was approaching on a horrible guise. For on that night I had the thought which was to result in annihilation for us all.

III

SOMETIMES, when I walked the village streets, I had met people who seemed to glance furtively at me with a wild look. These glances were quickly averted, but by them I had begun to decide within myself just who were the other members of the pack. Growing bolder and more certain, I had accosted certain of them, to find myself correct.

One by one, I sounded them out, but found only Simon the smith to be of my own sentiments toward our gruesome business. The rest all exulted in the joyous hunt, and could not, we were certain, be persuaded to revolt against this odious enslavement.

But gradually, as we became more hardened and unprincipled, more calloused to the suffering we caused, we had become yet more greedy and rapacious. Here Simon and I found a loophole to attack.

As I have said before, the master never took any of the money, jewels or other portable valuables which we found on the bodies or amongst the possessions of those whom we slew.

So I dropped a word here, a hint there, a vague half-question to one individual singly and alone, while Simon was doing the same.

The gist of all our arguing was, "What does the master take?"

This was a very pertinent question, for it was obvious to all of them that the master was not leader for nothing. He obtained something from each corpse when he went to it, alone, and we sat in the circle, waiting eagerly for the signal to rush in.

To me it was plain that this was nothing more material than the life blood of the slain unfortunates, which kept the master alive! Simon and I said nothing of this, gradualy forming the opinions of the others to the effect that the immortal souls were absorbed into the master's being, giving him eternal life.

This staggering thought opened great possibilities in the minds of most, and as we thought, all; later I was to learn to my sorrow that not all were so credulous. But more and more they became dissatisfied, less patiently did they restrain themselves from leaping in ahead of their turn, on our bandit raids. For working in their minds, like worms in carrion, or smoldering sparks in damp cloth, which will presently burst into flame, was this: "Why not be immortal myself?"

So were discord and revolt fomented, and so was I the unwitting cause of my further undoing and, strangely enough, my redemption.

NOW, my wife was a good woman, and I am sure that she loved me as much as I loved her, but this very love worked our ruin. All people have a weakness in one way or another, and she was no exception to the rule. She was jealous—insanely jealous!

My frequent absences, which I thought had been unnoticed, since I had been careful not to make the slightest noise in opening the window and quitting the house, had been observed for weeks.

I found later that one had told the master what Simon and I had started, and it was the only female member of our pack. But he had already perceived, with his cunning senses, the almost imperceptible signs of revolt against his absolute power. Determining to crush this at the start, he decided to make an example of someone to bind the rest more closely to him by means of a new fear.

Why he chose me instead of Simon *I* have not the faintest idea, unless it was that I was more intelligent than the ignorant clods that made up the rest of the pack.

But so it was, I was chosen to be the victim, and this is the way he set about to bind me forever to him.

He enlisted the aid of old Mother Molla, who was regarded as a witch that had sold her soul to the devil. How she got into the house I never was able to discover, for the original excuse was either forgotten later, or merely left untold. But to the house she came one day, probably obtaining an entrance on some flimsy pretext of begging for cast-off clothing, or of borrowing some cooking utensil.

Before she left she casually mentioned that she had seen me in the early morning before sunrise, coming past her hut. There were only two houses in that part of the wood, Mother Molla's and the charcoal burner's, whose name was Fiermann. All would have yet been well, but the old hag insinuated that "Fiermann had a young and pretty daughter and that he himself was in town very often over night." And so the seeds of suspicion were planted in my wife's mind.

She said that she ordered the hag out, and helped her across the threshold with a foot in her back, and when the old witch picked herself out of the mud she screamed, "Look for yourself, at half an hour before midnight," and hobbled away cackling to herself.

The mischief was done. At first my wife resolved to think nothing about the matter, but it preyed on her mind and gnawed at her heart. So to ease her suspicions she worked away a knot in the partition; and that night when I had gone to bed she waited and watched.

SHE saw me fling back the clothes and step out of bed, fully dressed, then walk silently across the floor and open the window slowly and carefully, vanishing into the moonlit night. At first, she told me later, she was horrified and heartbroken to think me unfaithful; then she resolved to go away or kill herself, so she would not be a hindrance to me any longer. But finally her emotions changed and vanished until only hate was left. She resolved to watch and wait to see what might befall. She sat by the knothole until I came back just as the cock crew; then she went to bed herself, to toss about sleeplessly until morning.

Night after night she waited, sometimes fruitlessly, for it was not every night that the silent call summoned us to the rendezvous. But when in a period of three weeks I had stealthily stolen out eight times, and she had satisfied herself that Fiermann had also been away, by artfully questioning his girl, her suspicions were confirmed. He was with the pack, but neither knew that. So she decided to confront me with the facts and tell me to choose between the two, "herself, the mother of my child, or this upstart chimney-sweep" (I use her own words.)

All this time the master's mind was working upon hers to such effect, that although she thought she was choosing her own course of action, in reality she was following the plans which the master had made for her.

ONE night I heard the silent howl, which never failed, when I was in the man form, to send a chill down my back. I had been expecting this for several days, and had remained dressed each night until midnight, to be in readiness for the summons.

I stepped carefully to the window and released the catch that held it down, then lifted—. What was this? It stuck! I tugged harder with no better results.

Well, then, I should have to use the door. It was dangerous, but might be done. At all means, anything was preferable to going wild within the house. So I turned and was struck fairly in the eyes by a splinter of yellow light. Someone was on the other side of the partition door with a lighted candle, and the door was slowly opening!

Instantly I knew that I was discovered. I bounded toward the bed, intending to simulate sleep until she had gone away, but the door flew open with a crash, and my wife stood in the doorway with a scornful look on her face, and a candle held high, which cast its rays upon me. It was too late to hope for escape, so I attempted to brazen it out.

"Well, what is it?" I asked gently.

"What were you doing at the window?" she asked.

"It is so hot in here that I was going to let some air in," I replied.

"To let air in, or yourself out?" came, though spoken in a low tone, as a thunderclap to me.

I was struck dumb, and then she told me the whole story as she knew it. The mass of lies with which old Molla must have started her mind in a ferment poured into my consciousness in a heap of jumbled words.

Again came the howling cry, that only I could hear, and I thought I detected a note of anger in it at my delay.

"At first," she said, "I did not believe, but when I saw with my own eyes—"

"Silence!" I roared with such vehemence that the window rattled.

"I will be heard!" she cried. "I have nailed down the window and you shall not pass through this door tonight!"

She slammed the door, and stood dauntlessly before it! My heart went out to her in this moment. That blessed, bright little figure, standing there so bravely, made me forget why I must go. I took a step toward her—and that long eery wail, which only re-echoed in my brain, sounded much more wrathfully—and nearer!

Torn between two desires, I stood still. My face must have been a mask of horror and anguish, for she looked at me in amazement, which softened to pity.

"What is it, dear?" she whispered. "Have I wronged you after all? Won't you tell me, darling?"

Then I felt the pangs of change beginning and knew that the transformation would follow quickly.

I seized a heavy stool, and flung it through the window, following it as quickly myself. If I was to escape, not a second could be wasted.

With a swiftness I had never dreamed she possessed, she ran to me as I crouched in the window with my hands on the side, and one knee on the sill, drawing myself up and over.

She seized me by the hair and dragged my head back, crying meanwhile, "No! No! No! You shall not go. You are mine and I shall keep you! That slut Stanoska will wait long tonight!"

Then she pulled so mightily that I fell upon my back. All was lost! It was too late, for I no longer had any desire to leave! Although I still desired to leave! Although I still maintained the outward appearance of a man, I thought as a beast.

I have often thought that the change first took place in the brain and later in the body.

I shrieked demoniacally, and another cry arose outside the house, sounding loud through the broken window.

She paled at the sound and shrank back against the table, terrified at my wild and doubtless uncanny appearance. I sprang to my feet, tearing madly at my clothes, ripping them from my body in pieces. I had all the terror of a wild animal now for encumbering clothing or anything like a trap.

When completely stripped, I howled again loudly and fell upon all fours, a misshapen creature that should never have existed. I had become a wild beast! But it was not I, who slunk, bellying the floor, hair all abristle with hate, toward the horror-stricken figure by the table; it was not I—I swear before the God that soon will judge me—who crouched and sprang, tearing with sharp, white fangs that beautiful white throat I had caressed so often!

AT A SOUND outside, I turned, standing astride my victim, and ready to fight for my kill.

With forepaws on the window sill, through the broken pane a wolf's head peered. With hellish significance it glanced at the door of the next room wherein lay our little girl, asleep in her cradle, then turned its eyes upon me in a mute command.

It was I, the man spirit, who for a moment ruled the monstrous form into which my body had been transmuted. It was the man, myself, who curled those thin beastly lips into a silent, menacing grin, who stalked forward, stiff-legged, hackles raised and eager for revenge!

As swiftly as the head had appeared it withdrew and suddenly came again, curiously changing in form. Its outlines grew less decided, everything seemed to swim before my eyes. I grew giddy, and there visibly the wolf's head changed into that

inscrutable parchment mask of the master. Those youthful eyes glared balefully into mine, with a smoky flame behind them.

I felt weak; again the beast was in the ascendant, and I forgot my human heritage. Lost was all memory of love or revenge. I, the werewolf, slunk through the door, over to the cradle, gloatingly stood anticipating for a moment while blood dripped from my parted jaws on my little girl's clean shirt. Then I clamped down my jaws on her dress, and heedless of her puny struggles, or her cries, I rose with a long clean leap through the broken window bearing my contribution to the ghoulish feast!

Then to my tortured memory comes one of those curious blank spots that sometimes afflicted me. I dimly remember snarls of fighting animals, and more faintly still, sounds of shots, but that must be the delirium of my wounds that speaks, for it could not be possible at that time of night that one might be wandering about armed with such an untrustworthy weapon.

Soon it was over. Over! I, the last of our line, took up the horrible hunt, blithe and rejoicing.

Down the valley roared the hellpack, and at the head the master. Foam from my bloody jaws flecked the snow with pink as we galloped along, and mounted the hill like a wave breaking on the beach. We were racing along at full speed with the master still ahead and the rest of the pack strung out at varying distances behind, when suddenly he turned in midleap, and alighting, confronted us.

The one who was directly in front of me, and behind the master, dug his feet into the ground and slid in order to avoid collision. I was going so swiftly I could not stop, and piled up on my mate. The next instant we were at the bottom of a strüggling, clawing, snapping heap.

For a moment we milled and fought, while the master sat on his haunches, and lolled his tongue out of gaunt grinning jaws, breath panting out in white, moist puffs.

Then we scattered as if blown apart, and also settled into a resting position, a very sheepish-looking pack of marauders. At that moment I felt taking place within me the tearing, rending sensation that always preceded the transforming of our bodies from one form to another. My bones clicked into slightly different positions; I began to remember that I was human, and stood erect, a man again.

All of my companions had been transformed likewise, and were standing where they had stopped.

What a contrast! Six men, white men, each a giant in strength, bound till death and after (as the un-dead which walk but do not move with mortal life), bound to a thing which I cannot call a man. A black creature only four feet high, which physically the weakest of us might have crushed with one hand. But six men were slavishly obedient to his every order, and moved in mortal fear of him. The pity of it! Only two of us were still human enough to understand that we were damned forever and had no means of escape. To look at their faces made that plain, for deeply graven there were lines that brutalized them, marking our swift progress toward the beast.

I was changing also. I had been told frequently how bad I looked, and my friends thought I should rest more, for it was plain that I was overtaxing my energies; but I always changed the subject as soon as possible, for I knew the real reason of my appearance.

BUT now the master was advancing. An irresistible force urged me toward him, and as I moved the other closed in about me, so that he and I stood in the center of a small circle.

Then he raised his hand, paw, or talon (I cannot say which, for it resembled all three), and spoke shrilly in a piping feeble voice, for the second and last time in my acquaintance with him.

"Fellow comrades." He leered at me, and I grew hot with rage but said nothing. "I have gathered you here with me tonight to give you a warning that you may use for your own profit. Leave me to do as I see fit and all will be well, but try for one instant to change my course of action or to attack me and you will curse the day you were born."

Then he lost control of himself.

"Fools," he shrilled; "cursed ignorant peasant fools, you who thought you could kill me, whom even the elements cannot harm! Idiots, clumsy dolts, who tried to plot against the accumulated intelligence of a thousand years, listen to me speak!"

Thunderstruck at this sudden outburst, we staggered and reeled under the revelation which came next.

"From the very first," he cried, "I saw through your stupid intrigue against me, and I laughed to myself. Every move you made, every word you spoke in the seeming privacy of your hovels, I knew long before you. This is nothing new to me. Eighty-four times has this been tried upon me, and eighty-four times have I met the problem in the same way. I have made an example of one of you to warn the rest, and there he stands!"

He whirled swiftly and thrust an ash-gray claw at my face. For some time I had been realizing now what he was about to say, and at this sudden blow I averted my eyes from his and sprang at his throat.

We went down together, and he would have died there and then, but they tore us apart. Poor blind fools! Again he stood erect, rubbing his throat where I had clutched it, and again he croaked, never glancing at me, as I was held powerless by three men.

"All of you have children, wives, or parents dependent upon you, and defenseless. I saw to that before I chose you, having this very thing in mind. I can at any time change any one of you to a beast by the power of my will, where ever I may be. Tomorrow, if you still resist me I will change you, or you," darting his paw at each in quick succession.

From the circle rose cries of, "No! No! Do not do that! I am your man, and Master, you are our father; do with us as you like!"

Triumphant, he laughed, there in the snowy plain beneath the starry sky, then bent his gaze upon me.

Seizing my chin, he forced my eyes to meet his, and growled, "And you? What say you now?"

I could not resist those burning eyes.

"Master," I muttered, "I am your willing slave."

"Then get back to your den," he cried, giving me a push that sent me prone in the snow, "and wait there till I summon you again."

The pack changed from men back to brutes again, and raced off toward the forest, and though I tried to follow, I could not move until the sound of their cries had faded away into the distance. Finally I rose and went to my dreary home again.

I will pass over briefly what followed; I do not think I could repeat my thoughts as I stumbled along through the night, nearly freezing from lack of clothing and the exposure that resulted.

DAWN was just arriving when I came in sight of the four walls I had so recently called home. I staggered in, and sank into a chair, too listless to build a fire.

After a while, mechanically, I dressed myself, started a blaze in the fireplace, and bethought myself of hiding the body, which lay in the other room, until I could flee. Plan after plan suggested itself to my mind, but all were soon cast aside as useless. Tired out, I buried my head on my arms, as I sat by the table, and must have dozed away some little time.

Suddenly I was aroused from the dull apathy into which I had fallen by a small timid knock on the door. My first thought was that I was discovered. A fit of trembling overcame me, which quickly passed, but left me too weak to rise.

Again sounded the rap, followed by the rasp of frosty gravel as footsteps haltingly passed down the clean-swept path.

Suddenly a plan had formulated itself in my poor distracted brain. I steeled my will to resolute action, hastened to the door, and threw it wide. No one was in sight.

Bewildered, I looked about, suspicious of more wizardry, and between two of the trees that fringed the road I spied a figure slowly traveling toward the village.

"Hai!" I shouted, cupping my hands at my mouth. "What do you want? Come back!"

As the figure turned and approached me, I recognized the halfwitted creature who limpingly traveled from village to village during the summer months, working when compelled by necessity to do so, but more often begging his food and shelter from more fortunate people.

"Why do you knock at my door?" I asked, as kindly as I could, when he had come near to me.

"I came last evening," he said, "and the lady that lives here said that she was alone and would not let me in or give me anything, but if later I would come when her husband had returned, she would let me have some old clothes, and something good to take with me. So I slept with the cows, and now I am come again."

I forced myself to speak composedly.

"You are a good lad, and if you will do something for me I will see that you receive new clothing and much money. Here is proof that I mean well," and I tossed a broad gold piece to his feet.

Wildly did he scramble in the dust of the path, but I had no laugh, ridiculous as his action would have seemed at another time.

He whimpered in his eagerness to be off, looked into my face, and cowered as does a dog that expects a blow.

Some of my agony of spirit must have been reflected in my face, for he shrank away, all his joy vanished and he faltered fearfully, "What would you have me do, master?"

His pitiable aspect struck to my heart, and the words I had been about to speak died still-born on the end of my tongue. I shall never reveal to anyone what my intention had been, but something nobler and purer than I had ever known enlivened my soul. I drew myself to my full height, glared defiantly at the quivering wretch and cried, "Go you to Ponkert. Arouse the people and bring the soldiers from the barracks. I am a werewolf and I have just slain my wife!"

HIS eyes seemed starting from his head, his nerveless and palsied limbs carried him shakily down the path, the while he watched me over his shoulder as if he expected to see me turn into a wolf and ravenously pursue him. At the end of the path he bethought himself of flight, threw the gold piece down and started with a curious reeling run toward the village.

A little wind was now rising, blowing flurries of snow and leaves about, and the round evil eye of yellow metal lay and blinked at the morning sun until a little whirlwind of dust collapsed on it and buried its gleam. But although I could not see it I knew it was there, the thing that all men slave, war, and die for, that all men desire, and obtaining are not satisfied, the struggle for which had maimed and damned more souls than any other one thing that had ever been. I went in, shut the door, and left it outside in the dirt, whence it came and where it belongs.

IT MIGHT have been a minute or a year that I sat at the table, with my head buried in my arms, for any memory that I have of it, but so I found myself when I was roused by a dull roar of many voices outside. Opening the door, I stepped out and waited, expecting nothing less than instant death.

A crowd of about fifty persons came surging up the road, and seeing me standing there, passively waiting, milled and huddled together, each anxious to be in at the death, but none caring to be in the forefront and first to meet the dreaded werewolf.

Much coaxing and urging was given certain of the crowd to send them to me, but none was eager for fame.

Finally stepped out one tanner, clad only in his leather apron, and carrying a huge fish-spear in his right hand.

"Come," he shouted; "who follows if I lead?"

Just then sounded the pounding of hoofs, far down the road.

"He who comes must hasten," thought I, "if he would see the finish."

The tanner harangued the steadily growing mob without avail, none desiring to be the first.

At last I was out of the common rut in which the rest of the village was sunken. What a moment! Even in my hopeless

situation I could not help but exult. Seventy-five or one hundred against one, and not a man dare move!

At last the tanner despaired of assistance and slowly moved toward me, now and then casting a glance behind to be assured of an open lane of retreat if such was necessary.

I believe, in that moment, that had I leapt forward at them, the whole flock of sheep would have fled screaming down the road; but I did nothing of the kind. I did not move, or even make any resistance when the tanner seized me by the shoulder, his spear ready for the deadly stroke. Why should I? Life had no longer any interest for me!

Finding that I stood passively, the tanner released my shoulder, grasped the spear in both hands and towered above me, his mighty muscles standing out like ropes on his naked arms and chest. The whole assemblage held its breath, the silence was that of death, and a loud clatter of hoofs twitched every head around as if they all had been worked simultaneously by a single string. Straight into the crowd, which broke and scattered before it, came a huge black horse, ridden by a large man, in the uniform of the king's soldiery.

As he came he smote swiftly, right and left with the flat of his long straight sword.

Down came the spear, and down swept the sword full upon the tanner's head. He fell like a poleaxed steer, while the spear buried itself for half its length in the ground by the door.

"This man is mine!" he shouted. "Mine and the king's! He must go with me for trial and sentence; touch him at your peril."

The crowd murmured angrily, started for us, but disintegrated again before the rush of half a company of soldiers that had followed their captain.

IV

"AND so, sirs," I was concluding my narrative in the prison barracks at Ponkert, "you see to what ends have I been brought by the machinations of this creature. I do not ask for life myself, for I shall be glad to die, and it is but just that I should; but give me revenge, and I will burn in hell for eternity most happily."

For a time I thought that the officer would deny me, for he ruminated long before he spoke.

"Can you," he said, "entrap this hideous band, if I and my men will give you help?"

I leapt from my chair and shouted, "Give me a dozen men, armed, and not one of those fiends will be alive tomorrow morning!"

Carried away by my enthusiasm, he cried, "You shall have fifty and I will lead them myself," but then more gravely, "you realize that we cannot leave one alive? That all must die? All?"

I nodded, and looked him squarely in the eyes.

"I understand," I said. "When we have won, do with me as you will. I shall not resist, for I am very tired, and shall be glad to rest. But until then, I am your man!"

"You are brave," he said simply, "and I wish I need not do that which I must. Will you grip hands with me before we leave?" he asked almost diffidently.

I said nothing, but our hands met in a strong clasp, and as he turned away I thought I saw moisture fleck his cheek. He was a man, and I wish I had known him earlier. We could have been friends, perhaps; but enough of that.

SOME distance from Ponkert there stands a wood, so dense that even at midday there in the center of the forest, only a dim twilight exists. Here sometimes laired the pack. At night we made it our meeting place, and now and again in the thickest recesses one or more of us would spend the day in seclusion. So, knowing this, I made my plans.

I tore my clothes, and dabbled them in blood, wound a bloody bandage around my head, and the soldiers tied my hands securely behind me, also putting a cord about my neck.

Toward evening we set out, about eighty of us in all, including the rustics who trailed along behind, carrying improvised arms, such as hay-forks, clubs, and farm implements which were clumsy, but deadly.

Straight through the heart of the wood we passed, I traveling in the midst, reeling along with head down as if worn out, which indeed I was. Now and then the soldier who held the other end of the cord would jerk fiercely, almost causing me to stumble, and on one of these occasions I heard a sullen, stifled growl from a thicket which we were passing. No one else apparently heard; I cautiously lifted my head, and saw a form slink silently into the darker shadows.

I had been observed, and the plan was succeeding!

WE THEN passed from the forest and came into the sunlight once more. Between the wood and the hills flowed the river that before had served me so ill. Overlooking this there frowned a great castle that had once dominated the river and the trade routes which crossed the plain on the other side. But this long ago, so long that the castle builders had passed away, their sons, and theirs also, if indeed there ever were such, leaving only the castle to prove they had ever lived.

As the years went on, various parties of brigands had held the great stone structure, and wars had been fought around and within. Slowly, time and the elements had worked their will unchecked, until the central tower squatted down one day and carried the rest of the castle with it.

Still there remained a strong stone wall, which had enclosed the castle once, but now formed a great square, thirty feet in height, around a shapeless mountain of masonry in the center. Under this imposing monument lay the last who had ever lived there, and some say that their ghosts still haunt the ruins, but I never saw any, or met one who had. At each side of the square, in the wall there stood an iron gate. These were still well preserved, but very rusty, so rusty indeed, that it was impossible to open them, and we were obliged to find an easier mode of entrance.

Finally we discovered a large tree, which, uprooted by a heavy wind, had fallen with its top against the wall, and so remained, forming a bridge which connected the wall and the ground by a gentle incline.

To gain the courtyard it was necessary to follow the wall around to where it faced the plain. Here a large section had fallen inward, leaving the wall but twenty feet in height at that point. Here we went down, by the rope which had tormented me so, and prepared our trap.

It was very simple; I was the bait and we knew that when the time came for the change, the pack would follow my trail unless the master was warned, and once inside the walls could not leap out. We could then slay them at our leisure, for we were more than ten to one, although many of the farmers had refused to enter the haunted castle and returned to the village.

At last it became near midnight, and faintly, far away, I heard the cries down below me in the wood.

"The time is near," I whispered to the captain as we stood in the enclosure. "I hear them gathering."

"Be ready," he warned the men. "Hide yourselves in the rocks. They come!"

Eagerly we waited, though none was visible now except the captain and two or three soldiers, standing by the pile of masonry.

As I waited near a large pile of stone blocks, I heard someone cry sharply, "Now!"

Shooting lights danced before my eyes, followed by black oblivion, and I fell forward on my face. I had been clubbed from behind.

WHEN I became conscious again the stars still gleamed brightly overhead, but they no longer interested me. My sole thought was to escape from these two-legged creatures that held me prisoner. Again I was the beast!

For the first time I had not been aware of the transition when it took place. Now I had no recollection of my past, and for all I knew I might never have been anything but a quadruped.

Came swiftly the realization that I was being called insistently. From the tail of my eye I saw a man standing beside me, but a little distance away. Perhaps I might escape!

I drew my legs up, and my muscles tightened for the spring. I would leap the wall, I would flee for my life, I would . . . and then a tremendous weight came crashing down on my hind quarters, breaking both my legs.

The pain was excruciating! I gave vent to a scream of curdled agony which was answered by howls of mingled encouragement and rage from beyond the wall. Then down from the wall came leaping, one at a time, five great gray brutes. They had followed my trail and come, as they thought, to save me, not dreaming they were being led into a trap.

The soldiers had been wiser than I, for they had foreseen what I had failed to see; that if my story was true, inevitably when my nature changed I would betray them to my comrades.

Between man and wild beast there can be no compromise, so they stunned me, and then toppled down a heavy stone, pinning me to the ground. Instead of warning the pack as I undoubtedly would have done had I but known earlier that they were present, I screamed for help, for the sudden pain drove any other emotion from my mind.

NOW all was confusion. Howl of beast, and shout of man, mingled in chorus with clash of pike and fang. Now and again, but infrequently, a shot punctuated the uproar, but these new weapons are too slow to be of practical use, so it was a hand-to-paw, and cheek-to-jowl conflict.

The five were giving a far better account of themselves than I had dreamed possible. Springing in and out again, with lightning movements they could tear a man's throat out and be gone before he could defend himself. The confusion was so great, the press so thick, that a man might kill his comrade by accident. I saw this happen twice.

Now only four of the beasts were visible, springing to and fro, fighting for their lives like cornered rats, and gradually forcing their way to the wall whence they had come. One must be down!

But no! I saw the missing one, old Mother Molla, rending with sharp white fangs at something which lay half hidden beneath her. A soldier stole silently behind her, and with a mighty display of strength thrust a pike completely through her body. But other eyes than mine had seen the stroke. The next instant the assailant went down and was buried from sight in the center of the snarling pack. Now the pack was, for several seconds, in a tight knot of bodies, and while they thus remained the soldiers leapt in, pikes and clubs rising and falling. Before Mother Molla had reached the corner toward which she was slowly crawling, coughing out, meanwhile, her life in bloody-bubbles, the remainder of the pack had avenged her, then died themselves.

IT WAS at this critical moment that a head peered over the wall and two bright little red eyes took in the scene. Why the master had thus delayed his arrival I cannot explain. But whatever his faults he was at least no coward, for the first inkling the men had of his presence was the sight of a black wolf springing down and landing on the heap of dead bodies which had represented his former vassals.

With a bound he was in the midst of the soldiers, fighting with fang and claw. They scattered like sheep, but returned, forming now a close-packed circle around him, barring all egress. Now his only chance of life lay in motion so swift that it would be unsafe to aim a weapon at him for fear of injuring one of the men.

He saw now clearly that all was lost, and quite obviously perceived that flight was his only hope. He gave me a glance of encouragement as I lay there raving and frothing, snapping at, and breaking my teeth upon, the cold unyielding rock that held me down; and he rushed madly about the inside of the circle, searching for a weak spot in it.

So in the soldiers pressed, striking now and then as he passed, but harming him not.

With hot red tongue hanging from his slavering jaws, he raced about the encircling cordon of foes. Soon was his plan of action made. He leapt in midstride straight at an ignorant yokel who wielded a hay-

fork. The poor fool struck clumsily, instead of dodging, which mistake was his last, for he missed. Instantly the master had torn out his throat with a single snap and was streaking toward the castle wall.

Now the way was clear; puffs of snow rose behind, before him, and on either side, but apparently he bore a charmed life, for none of the missiles struck him. As he reached the wall he left the ground in the most magnificent leap I have ever seen, from either man or beast, hung by his forefeet twenty feet above the ground for the space of time in which a man might count ten; then, while bullets be-starred the ancient masonry all about him, he wildly scrambled with his hind feet to draw himself up, and was soon over the wall and gone!

His enemies rushed to the rusted gates, but their very haste defeated their efforts, and by the time they reached the open the plain was bare of life. But over the hill to the eastward floated a derisive mocking howl. The master's farewell! From that day to this he has never been seen in Ponkert. Thus ended the *wampyr's* rule!

SO NOW is my ordeal ended, the master ousted, and the fear that held sway over the village is finished. I, out of all the pack that ravaged the land for many miles, alone am left alive.

Somewhere perhaps the master still roams silently, stealthily, in the cool darkness of our nights, but I am certain that never again will he return to Ponkert, for here is my assurance.

When his power crumbled to dust in the courtyard of that ancient castle, and he was forced to flee for his life, his last look and cry to me intimated that he would return and rescue me from my captors. There must have been some spark of humanity in that savage heart, something that would not allow him to leave those who had sworn allegiance to him; for witness that magnificent leap from the courtyard wall to the very midst of his foes, to save the one surviving member of his band.

He did return!

While I lay in the barrack dungeon, recovering from my broken bones and other injuries (for I must be in good health before I am permitted to expiate my crime), one night about a week after the fight I heard the old familiar silent cry.

I recognized the master's call and responded. I thought of all things I should like to tell him and could not through two feet of stone wall. I went over in my mind the whole series of actions by means of which I had escaped from his horrible enslavement.

Beginning with the involuntary murder of my wife and child, I related without uttering a spoken word that which I had done, and ended with the moment when I saw him leap the gap, a fugitive. I know he understood, for after a few seconds of silence, just outside the wall there arose the blood-chilling howl of a wolf. Higher and higher it rose, a long sobbing wail of hate, an undulating crescendo of sound; it thinned to a thread whose throaty murmur was drowned in the rushing trample of heavy feet overhead and the crash of exploding powder.

Flash after flash tore the velvet night, mingling with the shouts of the soldiers who were firing from the windows, and at some time in the tumult the master turned his back on Ponkert for the last time, I trust.

UTTERLY alone in the world, friendless and forlorn, I quit tomorrow this mortal form that had known such strange changes.

I go with no reluctance whatever, for I have nothing to live for, and the sooner gone, the sooner I shall expiate my sins, and at last win through to where I am expected. For I cannot believe that I shall suffer in torment forever.

Yet, I would even forego that bliss for the greater one of being a beast again and the master a man, so that I might feel my fangs sink into his black wrinkled throat, and feel the blood spurt warm into my mouth. Oh, to rip, to tear, to slash at that fiend, and have him utterly in my power! To feel his bones crunch beneath my powerful jaws, and to tear his flesh with them!

Yet—something I think perhaps he was

once as I, was tempted, fell, sinking lower and lower. Perhaps he, too, was not wholly to blame, but even as I, was weak and doomed from the beginning. Is it the fault of the pot that it is misshapen in the making?

They tell me that every pang I suffer now will shorten my punishment in the future. What my pains on earth shall be I know not. I may be broken on the wheel or stretched upon the rack, but I am resigned and fortified against my fate.

But there is one thing of which I am positive, for they have told me, to add pang upon pang, that I shall be flayed, alive, my hide tanned like a beast's and dark and gloomy history written upon it for all to read who can!

I have never heard of these things being done before, but I have no doubt that they will be done to me. However, I care not. So much have I suffered in heart and thought that no bodily discomfort can surpass my other torments. I am resigned. May he who reads take warning. Farewell to all whom I know and have known. Farewell!

WHEN the manuscript was finished I sat thinking for a little time. So this book was written on a human hide, which when occupied had enclosed Pierre's ancestor.

"I thought," said I to the old man, "that you told me that the person described in the narrative was your grandpere many times removed. But here it relates that his only child was murdered by himself. How do you explain that?" I asked.

"You will remember perhaps that he told how, after the flight from the cottage, immediately succeeding the act was a blank, save for a vague remembrance of shots. What is more probable than that someone aroused by the howling in the night should fire blindly at the noise, not once but several times. Granted that, it is probable that, frightened by the unexpected noise, the beasts would leave their prey. Such is the legend that has accompanied the book for centuries. Also it is said that this book has never been out of the possession of the Hungarian's descendants. Therefore, observing that I now possess the book, which was given to me by my father, as it was to him by his parent, I assume that in my veins courses the diluted strain of the werewolf."

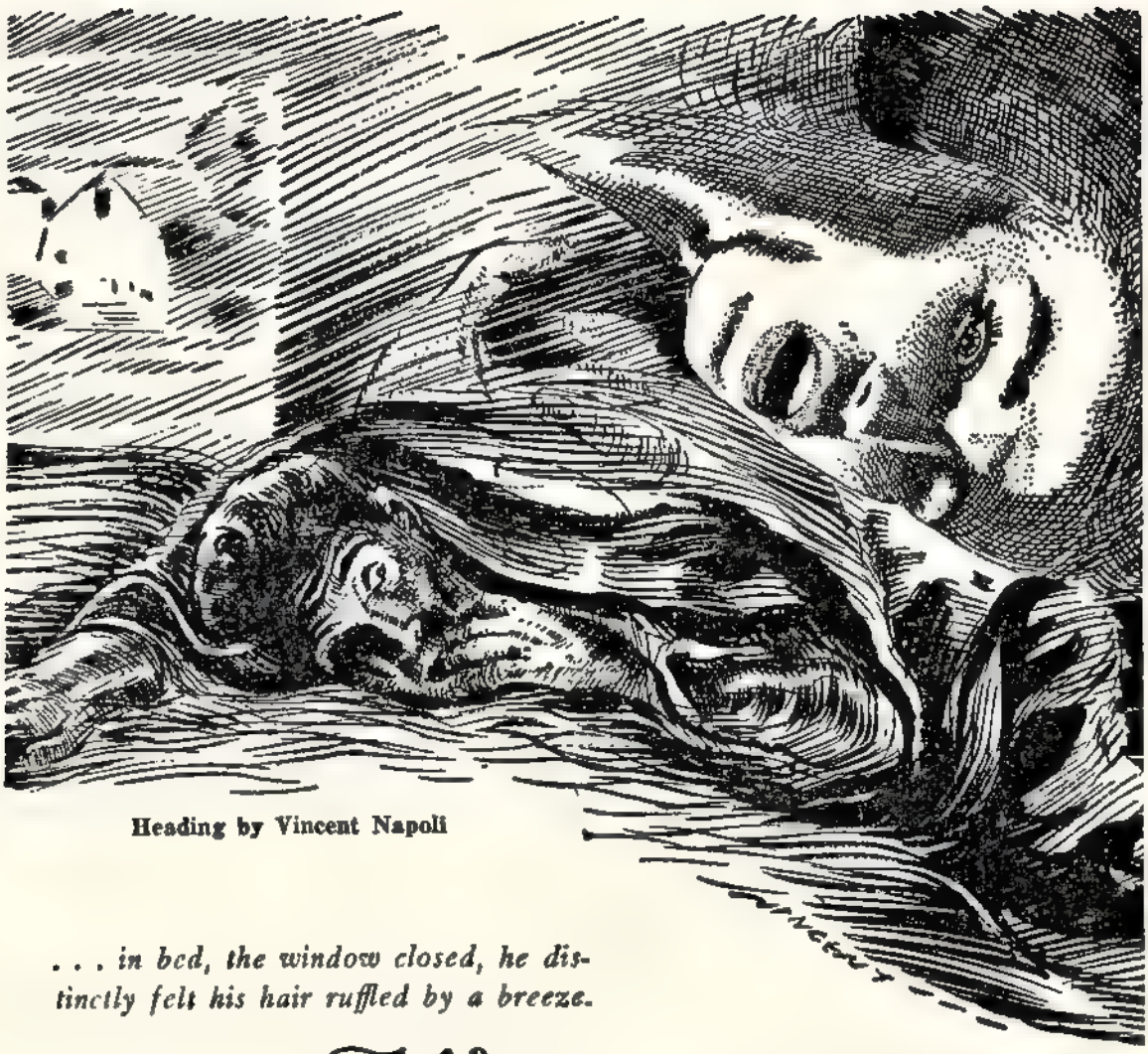
"This may all be true," I said. "Surely in the weeks of his imprisonment he must have been informed that his little girl had not been devoured; yet he speaks consistently through the tale, as if he knew nothing about the rescue."

"Ah," he replied, "that puzzled me also when I first heard of this. But it is my sincere belief that this information was kept purposely from him to add mental torture to his physical punishment. Why should they trouble themselves to ease the spirit of a man that was responsible for so many crimes?" And such a cruel glitter lit his eyes, that I had nothing more to say.

After I had left I congratulated myself upon being so fortunate as to exist in the prosaic Twentieth Century, and not in the superstition ridden ones which we have just barely left. For even superstitions must have a beginning, and who knows how much truth may lie, after all, in this weird tale?

I never went back to the inn after that. I often meant to, but other business was more important, and procrastination finally made the journey useless.

Pierre is dead now, leaving no relatives or friends but myself. I now possess the book and it lies before me, as I write the story it contains for the world to read, and to laugh at in scorn.



Heading by Vincent Napoli

. . . in bed, the window closed, he distinctly felt his hair ruffled by a breeze.

Wet Straw

BY RICHARD MATHESON

IT BEGAN some months after his wife died.

He had moved to a boarding house. He lived a sheltered life. Sale of her bonds had provided money. A book a day, concerts, solitary meals, visits to the museum; these sufficed. He listened to his radio and napped and thought a good deal. Life was good enough.

One night he put down his book and undressed. He turned out the lights and opened the window. Then he sat down on the bed and stared a moment at the floor. His eyes ached a little.

He lay down and put his arms behind his head.

There was a cold draft from the window so he pulled the covers over his head and closed his eyes.

It was very still. He could hear his own regular breathing. The warmth began to cover him. The heat fondled his body and soothed it. He sighed heavily and smiled.

Then, in an instant, his eyes were open.

There was a thin breeze stroking his cheek.

He could smell something. Something like straw, wet straw. It was not to be mistaken.

He gripped the sheets and, reaching out, he could touch the wall and feel the actual breeze from the window.

Yet, under the covers, where there had been only the warmth before, was a breeze. And a damp chilling smell of wet straw.

He threw the covers from him and lay on the bed breathing harshly.

The breeze from the window made him cold.

Then he laughed in his mind. A sudden dream, a nightmare. Too much reading. Bad food.

He pulled up the covers and closed his eyes. He kept his head outside of the blankets and slept.

THE next morning he forgot about it. He had breakfast and then went to the museum. There he spent the morning. He visited all the rooms and looked at everything.

When he was about to leave, he felt a desire to go back and look at a painting he had only glanced at before.

He stopped in front of it.

It was a painting of a countryside. There was a big barn down in the valley.

He looked at it dumbly. He began to breathe heavily, and his fingers played on his tie. How ridiculous he thought after a moment. That such a thing should make me nervous.

He turned away. At the door he looked back. He looked at the painting.

The barn had frightened him. Only a barn, he thought. A barn in a painting.

After dinner he returned to his room.

As soon as he opened the door he remembered the dream. He went to the bed. He drew up the blanket and the sheets and shook them.

There was no smell of wet straw. He felt like a fool.

That night, when he went to bed, he left the window closed. He turned out the lights and got in bed and pulled the covers over his head.

At first it was the same. Silent and breathless and the creeping warmth.

Then the breeze started again and he distinctly felt his hair ruffled by it. He could smell the wet straw. He stared into the blackness and breathed through his mouth so he wouldn't have to smell the straw.

Somewhere in the dark he saw a square of grayish light.

It must be a window, he thought suddenly.

He looked longer and his heart jumped when a sudden flash of light showed in the square. It was like lightning. He listened. He smelled the wet straw.

And he heard it raining.

He became frightened and pulled the covers down off his head.

The warm room was around him. It was not raining. It was oppressively hot because the window was closed.

He stared at the ceiling and wondered why he was having this illusion.

Again he pulled up the blanket to make sure. He lay still and kept his eyes closed tightly.

The smell was in his nostils again. The rain was beating violently. It was beating on a window. The square of light was a window then. He wondered if he could see out of it.

He opened his eyes and watched it and made out sheets of rain in the flashes. Then, rain began beating over him too, on a wooden roof.

He was in some place with a wooden roof and wet straw.

He was in a barn.

That was why the picture had frightened him. But why frightened?

He tried to touch the window but he couldn't reach it. The breeze blew on his hand and arm. He wanted to touch the window. Maybe, he delighted in the thought, maybe open it and stick his head out into the rain and then pull down the covers quickly to see if his hair were wet.

He began to feel more in space. There was no feeling of confinement in the blanket. He felt the mattress. Yet it was as though he lay on it in an open place.

The breeze blew over his entire body. And the smell was more pronounced.

He listened. He heard a squeak and then, a horse whinnying. He listened a while longer.

Then he realized he couldn't feel the whole mattress.

It felt as though he were lying on a cold wooden floor from his waist down.

He reached out his hands in alarm and felt the edge of the blankets. He pulled them down.

He was covered with sweat and his pajamas stuck to his body. He got out of bed and turned on the light. A refreshing breeze came through the window when he opened it.

His legs shook as he walked and he had to grab at the dresser to keep from falling.

In the mirror he saw a face pale with fear. He held up his hand and watched it shake. His throat was dry.

He went to the bathroom and got a drink of water. Then he went to the room and looked down at his bed. Nothing there but the tangled blanket and sheets and the stain where he had perspired. He held up the blanket and the sheets. He shook them before the light and examined them minutely. There was nothing.

He took up a book and read for the rest of the night.

THE next day he went to the museum again and looked at the picture. The dream was not forgotten.

He stood there and tried to remember if he had ever been in a barn. Had it been raining and had he stared out a window at the lightning? He tried hard to remember.

He remembered.

It was on his honeymoon. They had been there together. They had gone for a walk and been caught in the rain and stayed in the barn until it stopped. There had been a horse down in the stall and mice running and wet straw.

But what did it mean? There was no reason to remember it now.

That night he was afraid to go to bed.

He put it off.

Then, when his eyes would not stay open, he lay down fully dressed and left the window closed. He didn't use a blanket.

He slept heavily and there was no dream.

Toward the early morning he woke up. It was just getting light.

Without thinking, he pulled a blanket off the chair and threw it over himself.

There was no wait. He was suddenly in the barn.

Maybe the delusion had ended. He looked under again and saw nothing but the light filtering through the weave.

The afternoon and evening were devoted to reading. He went to bed because he was exhausted. There was no assurance in his mind that the dream was over.

He kept the covers off his head, holding them under his chin.

Sleep came, dreamless and black.

He didn't know what time it was when he woke up.

It was raining. A sob caught in his throat. The lightning flashed in the window and the rain was pounding on the roof.

He put out his hand to reach the window. He stretched his hand as far as he could. There were no bedclothes to stop it. He reached out farther and his muscles ached.

He felt his muscles throbbing and he knew he wanted to get away.

But he had to reach the window.

He was almost there. Another inch and his fingers would touch the pane. He strained harder.

"John."

A sudden reflex made his hand plunge deep through the glass. He could smell it clearly.

But there was no sound. It was not raining. There was a gray light in the window. Could it be that it was also morning in his imaginary barn?

He smiled drowsily. It was all too charming. He would have to try it in the afternoon and see if the barn was fully lighted.

He could hardly keep his eyes open.

He started to pull the blanket off his head when there was a rustle by his side.

He caught his breath. His heart seemed to stop and there was a tingling in his scalp.

A soft sigh reached his ears.

Something warm and moist brushed over his hand.

With a scream, he flung off the blanket and jumped onto the floor.

He stood there staring at the bed and clutching the blanket in his hands. His heart struck with gigantic heartbeats.

He sank down weakly on the bed. The sun was just rising.

THAT afternoon he looked under the blanket a moment.

He saw nothing.

He felt the rain spattering across his palm and his wrist burned. He pulled back his hand and stared in terror at where the voice had come from.

Something white stirred at his side and a warm hand caressed his arm.

"John," came the murmur in his brain, *"John."*

He couldn't speak. He reached around, clutching agonizingly for the blanket. But only the breeze blew over his fingers. There was a cold wooden floor under him.

He whimpered in fright. His name was spoken again soundlessly in his mind. He screamed.

The lightning flashed and he saw his wife lying by him, smiling at him.

Then the edge of the blanket was in his hand and, pulling it down, he rolled off the bed onto the floor.

Something was running across his wrist and there was a dull ache in his arm.

He stood up and put on the light. The bright glare filled the room.

He saw his arm covered with blood. He picked a piece of glass out of his wrist and dropped it on the floor in horror.

On his lower arm, the prints of her fingers, red.

He tore the sheet from the bed and ran down the hall to the bathroom. He washed the blood off and poured iodine into the thick gash and bandaged it. The burning made him dizzy. Drops of cold sweat ran down on his lips and into his eyes.

One of the boarders came in. John told him he had cut himself accidentally. When the man saw the blood running he ran and called a doctor on the telephone.

John sat on the edge of the bath tub and watched his blood splatter on the tiles.

The next day the cut was cleaned and bandaged.

The doctor had been dubious about the explanation. John told him he did it with a knife. But there was no knife to be found and there were thick patterns of blood all over the sheets and blanket.

He was told to stay in his room and keep his arm still.

He read most of the day and thought about how he had cut himself on a dream.

The thought of her excited him. She was still beautiful.

Memories became vivid.

They had lain in each other's arms in the straw and listened to the rain. He couldn't remember what they said. Vows of love probably.

He was not afraid she was coming back. His outlook on life was quite realistic. She was dead and buried.

It was some aberration of the mind. Some mental climax that had secretly put itself off until now.

Then he looked at his wrist and saw the bandage. It wasn't mental.

It hadn't been her fault though. She didn't ask him to crash his hand through the glass.

Perhaps he could be with her in one existence.

And have her money in another.

Something held him from it. It had been frightening. The wet straw and the darkness, the mice and the rain, the bone stiffening chill.

He made up his mind what he would do.

That night he turned out the lights early. He got on his knees beside the bed.

He put his head under the covers. If anything went wrong he had only to pull his head away quickly.

He waited. It was a while.

Then he smelled the straw and heard the rain and looked for her. He called her name softly.

There was a rustling. A warm hand caressed his cheek. He started at first. Then he smiled. Her face appeared and she put her cheek against his. The perfume of her hair intoxicated him.

WITHOUT sound the words filled his mind.

John. We are always one. Aren't we? Promise? Never part? If one of us dies the other will wait? If I die you'll wait and I'll find a way to come to you? I'll come to you and take you with me.

And now I have gone. You sent me. Made me that drink and I died. And you opened the window so the breeze would come in. And now I am back.

He began to shake.

Her voice became harsher, he could hear her teeth grinding. Her breath was faster. Her fingers touched his face. They ran through his hair and fondled his neck.

He began to moan. He asked her to let go. There was no answer. She breathed faster still. She began to gnash her teeth together. He tried to pull away. He felt the floor of his room with his feet. He tried hard to pull his head from under the blanket. But her grasp was very strong.

She began to kiss his lips. Her mouth was cold and her eyes wide open. He stared into them while her breath mingled with his.

Then she threw back her head and she was laughing and lightning was bursting through the window. All the sounds were magnified.

The rain was thundering on the roof and the mice shrieked and the horse stamped and made the barn shake.

Her fingers clenched on his neck. He pulled with all his might and gritted his teeth and wrenched out of her grasp. There was a sudden pain and his body rolled across the floor.

When the landlady came in two days later to clean, he was in the same position.

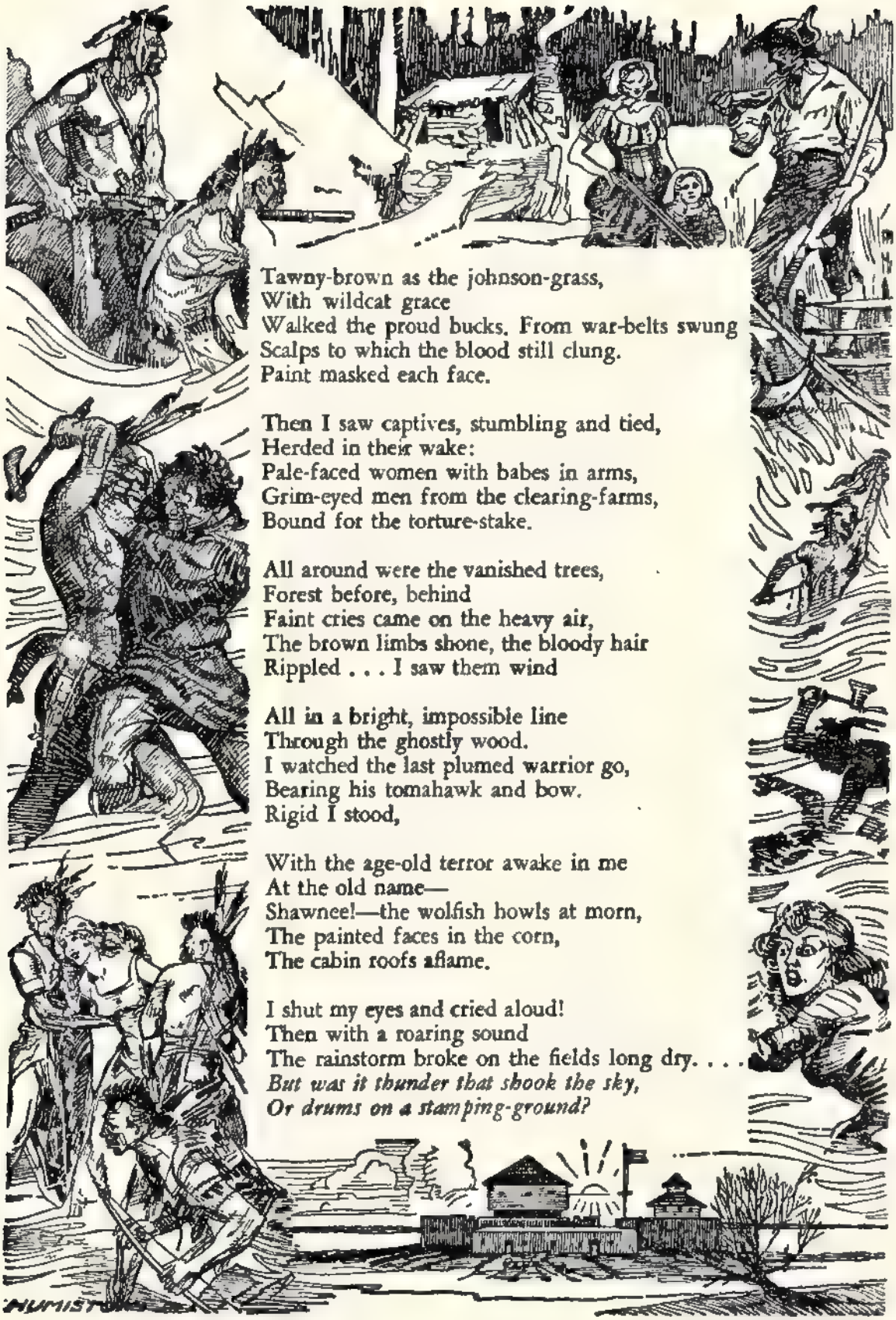
His arms were sprawled crazily in the dried puddle of blood and his body was taut and cold. But . . . his head was not to be found.

Red Ghosts in Kentucky

By LEAH BODINE DRAKE

AS I went home through the thirsty fields
Dark storm-clouds massed.
The heat-waves danced above the wheat
Where long ago sly doeskinned feet
Of redmen passed.

And suddenly, over Tatum's hill,
Redmen appeared!
Shawnee braves, who had made their stand
A century back in this river-land—
For a century unfeared.



Tawny-brown as the johnson-grass,
With wildcat grace
Walked the proud bucks. From war-belts swung
Scalps to which the blood still clung.
Paint masked each face.

Then I saw captives, stumbling and tied,
Herded in their wake:
Pale-faced women with babes in arms,
Grim-eyed men from the clearing-farms,
Bound for the torture-stake.

All around were the vanished trees,
Forest before, behind
Faint cries came on the heavy air,
The brown limbs shone, the bloody hair
Rippled . . . I saw them wind

All in a bright, impossible line
Through the ghostly wood.
I watched the last plumed warrior go,
Bearing his tomahawk and bow.
Rigid I stood,

With the age-old terror awake in me
At the old name—
Shawnee!—the wolfish howls at morn,
The painted faces in the corn,
The cabin roofs aflame.

I shut my eyes and cried aloud!
Then with a roaring sound
The rainstorm broke on the fields long dry. . . .
But was it thunder that shook the sky,
Or drums on a stamping-ground?

Once again the red rabbit lurched forward, a perceptible inch or even less.

"Sexton, Sexton, in the Wall"

BY AUGUST DERLETH

THE rabbit moved.

The extraordinary thing about it was that the rabbit had been dead for several hours. The moment was briefly unpleasant for Cornillo Martens, because he had ascertained beyond doubt that the rabbit lying at the foot of his row of peonies was dead. He had come out to bury it.

In a moment he rationalized. Of course, the garden lamp encouraged the illusion in the close-pressing darkness. The rabbit, being dead, he told himself, couldn't have moved. Therefore he only imagined that it did.

Once again the rabbit lurched forward, a perceptible inch or slightly less.

While he stood there in pulse-mounting astonishment, he saw that the rabbit's body had advanced in this painfully slow manner a full ten inches from the place where he had left it lying. He kept his light turned squarely on it, and now the moon was rising high enough to cast an additional illumination on the garden.

Heading by Virgil Finlay

As he stood watching, a beetle came whirring out of the darkness and landed on the dead rabbit. It scurried to the earth, came around to the advancing end of the dead animal, and took hold of it, tugging with all its might.

At that instant, the rabbit moved forward once again.

A second beetle came out from under and vanished beneath the rabbit on the other side.

Of course, thought Cornillo Martens, the beetles offered a solution to the riddle.

He waited his chance and caught one, carrying it away and forgetting the dead rabbit. The creature's internment could wait until morning.

Under his study lamp, the beetle shone an orange-red and black.

A strange insect. He had no idea what it was, but certainly Rick Freiman would know.

"I THOUGHT insofar as your field is entomology, Rick, you could tell me what this is," he explained on the following day.

"*Necrophorus,*" said Freiman, cocking a judicious eye at it. "An unusually large specimen. Well developed. Commonly called sexton or carrion beetles. Some people think of it as the 'bearer of the dead', and that's fitting. Where did you get it?"

Martens told him about the rabbit. "And when I went out to bury it this morning, the body was gone. Just vanished. It gave me a turn," he finished.

The entomologist chuckled. He leaned back, taking off his glasses to polish them. "I don't wonder. You scare easily anyway, Cornillo. You'd better watch that; aren't you supposed to take things easy on account of your heart or something?"

"Something," murmured Martens.

"And you feuding all the time with old man Garner. Neighbors fighting!" He shook his head and clucked disapprovingly.

"*Necrophorus,*" repeated Martens. "Of course, that explains what they call them."

"These little beetles are immensely valuable," Freiman explained. "Nature's most efficient scavengers. "Don't you ever wonder, Cornillo, that you so seldom come on dead bodies of wild animals? After all, the average field teems with mice, and rabbits abound throughout the countryside, to say nothing of rats, squirrels, voles, and the like. Some of them must die from disease or other natural causes. The predators don't get them all. But how often do you come on their bodies, eh? Not often at all—thanks to *Necrophorus*. The fact is, they seem to smell death; it draws them. A single pair of them will make off with a good-sized animal in a night. The one gets under, on his back, and with his legs balances the body and moves it forward, half an inch to an inch at a time. The female comes along and pulls and tugs at the body until they've moved it to the spot they've selected for burial; then they scrape out the earth beneath the body and let it go down until they've got it covered. And then the purpose of their mortuary concern begins to emerge."

Cornillo Martens blinked warily. "They have a purpose?"

"Nothing in nature takes place without purpose, Cornillo. Not even you with your garden. Yes, they have a purpose—a very primary one. Once the creature is buried, a ball of its fur is removed, the female lays her eggs, and the two remain there feeding on the body, until the eggs are hatched. There is food for the entire family. *Necrophorus,* by the way, is one of the very few insects to remain with their eggs until and past the hatching."

"Horrible," muttered Martens.

Freiman shrugged. "That depends on your point of view, I suppose."

CORNILLO MARTENS' distaste did not prevent him from exhibiting his beetle to the Garner grandchildren, whom he found peering over his garden wall that afternoon.

A boy and a girl, very pleasant and amiable, in contrast to their grandfather with his eternal experiments.

"What is it, Mr. Cornillo?" pressed Paul.

"It's pretty," decided his sister.

Martens explained, somewhat didactically, making sure that the children fully understood the function of the sexton beetle and its importance in nature's plan.

"Where does it live?" asked Cecy.

"Oh, probably in the wall," said Martens.

"In a tree?" ventured Paul.

"Perhaps."

Cecy extended her hand. "Please, may I have it, Mr. Cornillo?"

He gave it to her, somewhat doubtfully.

He told himself later that they must certainly have understood; they were intelligent children. At this moment Cecy was probably bearing the beetle to her grandfather, triumphant and proud.

At the moment, however, the children were doing no such thing. They had erected a kind of dais, deposited the beetle upon it, and were chanting to it. Their chant presently reached Cornillo Martens' ears.

Sexton, Sexton, in the wall,
When he dies, come bury Paul.

Martens was appropriately and disagreeably shocked.

Sexton, Sexton in the tree,
When I die, come bury me.

Martens did not quite manage to close his study windows in time to shut out the last couplet.

Sexton, Sexton, in the willow,
When he dies, put down Cornillo.

He was taken aback, but he strove to rationalize his disgust and the children's occupation by retreating into a philosophical perspective. It might be expected that an iconoclast like old Garner would encourage such attitudes in his grandchildren. Science and the scientific method, indeed!

THE children, meanwhile, were now at last bearing off their trophy in triumph to show it to their grandfather. They were making up further couplets as they marched; it was fortunate that Martens was spared them, for, truth to tell, he was rather more unnerved at the concept of *Necrophorus* and its duties than he wished to admit even to himself. He was a woefully imaginative man, in contrast to his neighbor, who appeared to have no imagination at all, other than in matters scientific.

Cornillo Martens had always lived a life of comparative ease; perhaps Claude Garner had not forgiven his not having to work. But there were other points of difference between them, most particularly Martens' careless disdain for Garner's scientific experiments, which seemed to him totally lacking in interest and even in meaning. Hormone drug experiments! Great Heaven! What would not men like Garner think of next?

WHAT would have been a pleasant evening was spoiled by the appearance of Claude Garner in Martens' garden. He was a short, rotund man, with a moon-like face, little dark eyes, and a mouth so broad that it was batrachian in aspect, and could assume the most ludicrous shape in a smile which seemed always to have a hint of scorn or mockery about it. Martens hurried out at once to inquire into the purpose of this invasion.

"I am looking for the place where your little friends buried their rabbit," explained Garner.

"*My* rabbit," corrected Martens. "And they are *not* my friends."

"Very well. I'll make them mine, then." Garner shrugged. "As a matter of fact, I've been looking for specimens for some time. I'd like to experiment with them. Sexton beetles used to be more common than they are now. When their young hatch, I should have quite a crop, quite a crop."

He spoke with such evident satisfaction that Martens was more displeased than ever.

"A purely scientific interest, I suppose," Martens could not help saying with what he hoped was a withering edge of sarcasm.

"Oh, certainly, certainly. My little experiments are all purely scientific, of course. Perhaps a little unorthodox."

He leered unexpectedly and then relaxed his features into an almost obscenely wide smile.

"What is wrong with you, Garner, is that hammering insistence on science, science."

"Dear me, one would hardly suspect you

of harboring such strong feeling." He clucked disarmingly. "One might as well suggest that what is wrong with you, Martens, is your lack of it, your unbridled imagination. Mother Nature's Little Cleaners, indeed! Misleading my grandchildren. Just listen to them!"

From the direction of Garner's house, the childish voices were raised thinly in the evening air.

"What are they singing?" asked Martens.

"A bedtime song. Prayers have gone overboard, you see."

"Thanks to you and your scientific attitude," retorted Martens.

"Ah, no, thanks to you and your sexton beetles."

The voices came suddenly quite clear.

Sexton, Sexton, in the rock,
Come and put in Parson Stock.
Sexton, Sexton, in the log,
Come and bury Maxie's dog.
Sexton, Sexton, in the wall,
When we die, put down us all.

"Ah, here we are!" exclaimed Garner. "This is where they've buried him." He rubbed his hands together anticipatingly. "Now, we shall just see. In due time . . ." He left his sentence unfinished, leered once again at Cornillo Martens, and scurried off.

MARTENS looked at the loose sand beneath which, according to Garner, the rabbit lay. He resisted the impulse to disinter it and carry it off somewhere else, just to spite Garner; had he not had such a horror of the entire proceeding which was presumably going on down there, he would have done so. But his horror was markedly stronger than his sense of injury and his desire to strike at Garner.

He found it difficult to go to sleep that night. However ridiculous it was, he could not rid his thoughts of the hideous occupation of the sexton beetles in his garden. He felt so strongly about them, that whenever he thought of old Garner's interest, he was almost grateful to think that in due time Garner would cleanse his garden of them. He could see in his mind's eye the spot in the garden where the rabbit was buried; his lively imagination supplied him with lurid details of the occupation of the sexton beetles down under.

Even his auditory sense gave him no peace. If he heard the gnawing of a mouse, he fancied it symbolized the scavenging of *Necrophorus* in the dark earth. If it was not this, some trick of his memory and his auditory nerve made him think he could still hear the voices of old Garner's grandchildren chanting,

Sexton, Sexton, in the willow,
When he dies, put down Cornillo.

All in all, Cornillo Martens put in a most disagreeable night.

IT TOOK three days before Martens had regained his customary aplomb. Even then he carefully skirted the bed of sand not far from the foot of his peony rows. On that day, however, he encountered the Garner grand-children once more. He found them at a place in his garden wall which had broken down, the stones having fallen and scattered into the garden. Martens was vexed, and did not immediately see the children.

"Whatever broke down my wall?" he cried aloud.

"The ants," replied Cecy promptly.

Then he saw them. They were squatting before a dais, on which was some kind of insect.

He thought at first that it was a dragon fly, minus wings.

"Grandpa's ants," added Paul helpfully.

"Wouldn't doubt it," said Martens.

"Like this one," said Cecy, pointing to the dais.

Martens stepped through the aperture in the wall and confronted the dais. On it lay what was unmistakably an ant. It appeared to be in every way save one like the common black ant—except that it was easily four inches long. He gazed at it, spellbound. Ants of such size could certainly have broken his wall. But ants did not grow to such a size. Quite suddenly the nature of the scene —the raised dais with the dead ant on it, the two children squatting like primitive worshippers before it, and across the broad lawn

the dark house which looked so sinister and menacing—filled Martens with horror. His pulse fluttered alarmingly. He stepped back into the illusory safety of his garden.

"Where did you get that ant?" he managed to ask.

"Out of the wall," said Cecy.

"A stone fell on it," offered Paul. "We're going to have a funeral."

Martens licked his dry lips. "Are there others there?"

"Sure," said Cecy. "Grandpa put them there. After he was through, he brought them out and set them free."

"They're too big," he muttered protestingly.

"He's got bigger ants than this," said Cecy scornfully.

What was it old Garner was reputed expert in? Hormone experiments? Growth stimulants? Martens backed away, forgot about his wall, and walked unsteadily along the garden path where flowers seemed at this moment to mock him.

Behind him rose the voices of the children, chanting:

Ant, Ant, who has plans,
As great as any man's;
Ant, Ant, you are dead;
Sexton comes to make your bed.

Cornillo Martens fled.

"Ants four inches long?" repeated Freiman. "My dear fellow, your imagination's running away with you. No such thing." He shook his head decisively.

"But I tell you I saw them!"

"You imagined you saw them. That's rather more like it. It's just impossible. It's not scientifically sound."

"It is for Garner. I tell you I didn't imagine it, Rick. Could he be making some kind of hormone experiments? To stimulate growth?"

"Listen, that sort of thing happens only in the pages of sensational magazines."

By the time he left Freiman, Martens was more than half convinced that he had made a mistake. After all, the children had told him it was an ant; he expected to see an ant; suppose they had got some similar insect, removed its wings, left it to resemble an ant; his imagination could well have done the rest.

But the closer he got to home, the more uncertain he became. An ant it certainly had been. Four inches long. One of old Garner's experiments. Nevertheless, as he had been ordered to do by Freiman, he went out and repaired his garden wall. The children, fortunately for his peace of mind, were nowhere around; they had duly buried the dead ant and were now far off on the other side of the house observing a suspiciously large cabbage butterfly which had come flying out of their grandfather's laboratory window. Cornillo Martens was spared any further shock to his sensibilities.

FOR a week, Martens went about his semi-sedentary existence in comparative peace. He saw nothing of Garner or his grandchildren. He avoided his peonies and indeed, the entire corner of the garden where the rabbit was buried. At the end of that week he went around to have his usual monthly check-up.

"You've been straining yourself, Martens," said his doctor. "I warned you about that."

"I'm living very quietly."

"Worried about something?" pressed the doctor. "Finances?"

Martens shook his head. Could he tell his doctor that he was worried about a beetle called *Necrophorus,* a cantankerous old man who presumed to be a scientist and made experiments on insects, and a pair of children who had a blandly innocent way of upsetting him profoundly? Quite impossible.

"Well, take things easy. Don't get excited."

Ah, but it was easy to give such advice, thought Cornillo Martens, making his way home. He was not conscious of any strain.

True, he had avoided the garden burial place of the rabbit and its gruesome hosts. But not out of fear, rather out of distaste.

Nevertheless, confronting the problem as he entered his grounds, he conceded that it would not do to avoid the spot. Forthwith, he forced himself to walk directly to the end of the row of peonies where the rabbit was buried.

THERE was a hole in the ground there. The rabbit had been removed. The dryness of the earth suggested that its removal had been accomplished a day or more ago. A shovel had been used. Of course, old Garner had got at it—beetles and all! He was suddenly unreasonably angry, quite as if old Garner had put something over on him; but presently his anger gave way to an equally unreasoning apprehension. He stood for a few moments in the warming sun, pondering what to do.

His doctor, meanwhile, having given some thought to Martens and his grave condition, solved his dilemma. He telephoned within an hour and proposed that Martens take a short trip, preferably by car, and remain away for a month. If he had no one to take him to the seashore, he himself would do so.

So Cornillo Martens went to the coast for a month and enjoyed himself. He actually took on weight. Apart from his separation from his garden, he was quite happy. There was nothing to cloud his days—no unpleasant neighbor, no unpredictable children, and, above all, no hallucinations about insects. Here all the ants, mosquitoes, flies, and midges were the proper and respectable size, and no nonsense about it; one swatted them, poisoned them, or ignored them without fear of consequences. He played canasta or bridge with equal delight; he listened to the radio and sat and watched the sea. He was certain that his health was never better when, at the end of his holiday, he returned home.

He was scarcely home a day before he encountered the children once more.

He had gone into his garden and was walking up and down the paths, examining his flowers, when he heard their voices raised into the sunny afternoon. He stopped and listened, without any premonition.

Sexton, Sexton, in the wall,
When he dies, come bury Paul.

He was painfully surprised. He had thought the children had forgotten all about *Necrophorus.* What had reminded them? He walked cautiously to the garden wall and peered over.

The children were on their knees before a dais. Something which looked at first like a black frog lay on the dais. But, of course, it was not a frog; it resembled a beetle considerably more. Black, with red or orange bands. It had a vaguely frightening familiarity, but his mind resolutely refused to accept knowledge. Nor did he step forward to take a closer look; indeed, he retreated a little.

The children saw him.

"Hello, Mr. Cornillo," said Cecy.

Paul echoed her.

"Good afternoon, children," he said gravely. "What in the world have you got there?"

"Grandpa's bug," said Paul.

"The little one," added Cecy.

Martens swallowed dryly. "Have a good time," he said, and backed away.

He was profoundly shaken. Something would have to be done about old Garner. The children were growing into savages. What could their parents be thinking to permit their wanton exposure to such an iconoclast? But what could be accomplished against the almost certain indifference of the parents and the cold defiance of old Garner?

The voices of the children drifted in to him.

Sexton, Sexton, in the tree,
When I die, come bury me.
Sexton, Sexton, in the willow,
When he dies, put down Cornillo.

Cornillo Martens could feel his pulse mounting with excitement and apprehension.

What had been going on in old Garner's laboratory? And what was it the children were singing to? Where had they got into such an abysmal habit? Little savages! What could one expect of Garner's grandchildren? The scientific attitude. Ha!

IN THE evening he ventured into the garden. It was a singularly lovely evening. He went past the peony row with scarcely a flutter; he went on to the rose bed, and beyond that, to the coreopsis.

There he saw a dead rabbit.

He stared at it stupidly, with the air of a

man who has just realized unexpectedly that this is the part of the play or cinema at which he came in. At any moment, the entire sequence of events would begin all over again.

The very thought served to stir him to the depths. His pulse bounded and climbed. His apprehension fed his imagination. In one kaleidoscopic view he envisioned old Garner, his mad experimentation, the grotesquely large ant, the frog-like thing on the children's dais, the horribly suggestive inching forward of the rabbit's carcass: the entire sequence beginning once more. He did not think he could bear to relive the events of the past six weeks again.

He turned to flee, but at that moment something exploded inside him.

He crumpled and fell against a small tree, slumping to the ground, and turning over on his back. There he lay, helpless.

Cornillo Martens had no illusion about his condition. He tried to call out, but he had not enough strength left to accomplish even this.

At this moment the glory of the full moon burst over the garden wall, and laved him in its light. Everywhere the insects stridulated, making their dry, rasping, not unpleasant music in the summer night. But somewhere, ringing cacophonously among the sounds of the insects, seemed to weave the thin voices of the children singing:

Sexton, Sexton, in the willow,
When he dies, put down Cornillo.

Rick had said they could smell death. At this moment nothing seemed to matter —not old Garner, not the children, not even the fact that he himself was almost certainly dying.

There was a sudden whirring of wings and something landed on his chest.

His eyes encompassed it, incredulously. It was a sexton beetle; there was a full six inches from one of its eyes to the other. It sat there waiting, looking curiously and ridiculously like old Garner, assuring him his interest was purely scientific.

The Eyrie

(*Continued from page* 8)

edge of both fact and fiction in this field, has done a very sound job of similarity, contrast and selection.

Away and Beyond by A. E. Van Vogt • A collection of this author's short stories from various fantasy and sf magazines.

DOUBLEDAY SCIENCE FICTION

Double Jeopardy by Fletcher Pratt • A master hand at futuristic fiction spins this absorbing tale of crime solution by a heady mixture of scientific technique and native ingenuity on the part of his detective. It took all that, for apparently the suspected killer could strike in two places at the same time.

RINEHART & COMPANY

Lands Beyond by L. Sprague de Camp and Willy Ley • Two well-known and widely acclaimed writers of fantasy and sf combine their considerable talents to write a sort of geography of fantasy, of those lands of the imagination which have sprung from legend and arisen from beyond man's known horizon; the land of Lost Atlantis, of Prester John, of Sinbad the Sailor, of lost tribes in history. Truly a vast subject for research and speculation, and here ably treated for reader enjoyment.

Heading by John Arfstrom

Six Feet of Willow Green

BY CARROLL F. MICHENER

"... the man who overestimates himself is like a rat falling into a scale and weighing himself."

IT WAS for no love of the Chinese that Allister risked his life in the shark-plagued waters off Samoa.

The motive was largely a rigid sense of fair play, which had led him into more than one hazard. Also, he hated the second mate, who was so ridiculously afraid of Ssu Yin's serpent.

Therefore the Chinese need have nourished no great feeling of obligation. Scales for weighing honor and indebtedness, however, are not the same in the East as in the West, where motives are perhaps more closely scanned; and it would have been difficult to persuade Ssu Yin that he did not owe more than life to Allister. He felt that he owed two lives; that of his own leather-yellowed body and that of the woman whose soul, so he believed, now sojourned on its vast pilgrimage along the Nirvana-road of incarnations, within his snake's scaly longitude.

To the Chinese, an obligation clearly understood is a collectible asset. Death or the devil—or dishonor that is worse than either—claims him who escapes payment of a just debt. Therefore it need not be surprising that the magnitude of his fancied obligation to Allister discomfited Ssu Yin, and left him more than melancholy for the remainder of the voyage.

On the other hand, his devotion to the serpent, a poisonous six feet of willow-green relieved by the satin-white ribbon of its belly, was greater than before, and the venom of his regard for the second mate, who had dared toss the reptile's basket

overboard, was very disquieting to observe.

The thing had happened in a flash that gave Allister no more than a moment for reflection before the action that had bound him with inseverable fetters to the destinies of Ssu Yin. The second mate, who was Irish, with a soul fed upon belief in banshees and leprechauns and the traditions of St. Patrick, had chafed bitterly at the captain's indifference toward the Chinaman's obnoxious galley-pet.

His irritation had grown steadily since the third day out from Panama, when the reptile's presence on board had been discovered. The captain was one of those humans in whom a snake breeds no particular revulsion; he merely winked at Ssu Yin's vagary, stipulating, as an afterthought, that the serpent should be tied by the neck and at all times safely confined to its bamboo cage.

The second mate's displeasure grew into agitation, and then into a saturnine fear. Ssu Yin's notion that the serpent was animated by the spirit of his dead wife, a creature of frail morals whose fate it had been to be slain in the act of infidelity, reduced the mate to paroxysms of superstitious rage. A suggestion of insanity blazed from his eyes, and he vented his irritation upon the crew in a variety of diabolical mistreatment. Stealthily he plotted the serpent's destruction.

He had long to wait, for Ssu Yin was rarely beyond sight of his somnolent pet. But one day, growing reckless from the excess of his somewhat alcoholic fear, the second mate seized the bamboo cage, well beyond reach of its occupant's fangs, lifted it brusquely through the window of the cook's galley—from under the very eyes of Ssu Yin—and gave it a triumphant heave overboard.

With a yell that seemed to supply added impulse to his flying heels and to stiffen his queue into a rigid horizontal, Ssu Yin darted from the galley and flung himself after his ophidian treasure.

Allister turned automatically toward a lifeboat, but the second mate thrust him back. A fanatical cruelty colored the leer on the man's face as he watched Ssu Yin bobbing helplessly some yards from the bamboo cage, quite evidently unable to swim.

"Aren't you going to launch that lifeboat?" Allister bawled at him.

The mate spat over the rail, with a sullen negation.

"The hell you won't," snarled Allister, poising swiftly to plunge after the Chinaman. "Let's see if you'll do it for a white man, then."

THE mate lowered the boat, not so much because Allister was white as because he was a brother of the captain.

There was a calm sea, and no difficulty in the rescue. The crew fished up the three of them, Allister supporting the exhausted Ssu Yin, who in turn held aloft, out of the wash of the sea, his most unhappy dry-land reptile.

The mate shut himself up in his cabin and drank Jamaica rum with such proficiency that it became necessary to lodge him in the brig. He wallowed there for the remainder of the voyage into Penang, where Ssu Yin, with the serpent clasped to his meager bosom, scuttled ashore and vanished from the mate's bleary ken.

Allister, for whom the world was in its opening chapters, lost himself in bizarre and dizzy pages of Oriental life. At the end of three years he was "on the beach," tossed up with other human jetsam from the slime of the Orient's undertow.

He had brawled with sailors from many seas in the dives of Hongkong, tasted the wickedness of native inland cities, and squandered himself in a thousand negligible pursuits between Bangkok and Peking. He was the eternal parable of West meeting East, a conjunction perpetually fatal to the insecure soul. For it is only the strong who can sip safely at the pleasant vices of a mellower civilization.

On a day squally with the pestilent dust of an obscure Chinese outport, Allister sat gazing at a wooden door in a wall. He was oblivious to outward discomfort, although his clothes were remnants through which the wind drove chilly misery. He felt only one need, and his mind had room for but one thought, and that was the gratification of an unholy lust. It was three days since opium had caressed his shrieking nerves.

Beggars, exhibiting their unspeakable sores, the ghastly souvenirs of real or simulated disease, jostled him in their crawling

search for charity; it was the plaza of a temple where he had taken up his watch.

Curses, and the muttered insults that are flung to foreigners, came to him from the crowd, but he appeared not to hear; his senses were subject only to one diversion, and that was the wall before him, with its wooden door, and the peephole that for an hour of eternities had remained blind. If he could not gain the attention of Ssu Yin he would be doomed to another night of drugless terror.

To knock on the door would be useless; he had tried that. Only a certain alarm would gain admittance, and no amount of cunning had been capable of revealing this to him. To shout was equally futile, for Ssu Yin had become almost wholly deaf, the result of his barber's unskillful wax-scraping—an accident with an equally unfortunate sequel, the barber having been bitten to death shortly afterward by Ssu Yin's serpent.

IT WAS necessary, Allister knew, to wait for the soya-brown eye that glistened intently through the peephole at a certain hour of the day—the eye of Ssu Yin, focused expectantly upon some indeterminate object within the temple grounds.

The impatient accents of a woman, half-concealed behind the discolored marble flank of a stone lion with the head of a dog, roused Allister. He had been long enough in the Orient to absorb an understanding of many dialects.

"The serpent-eared grandfather of a skillet is late," complained the voice, and there was an answering murmur from another woman at her side.

Allister stole a glance at them, and saw that they, like himself, were interested in the wooden door. One was young, and probably, though not definitely, a courtesan; she may have been merely an adventurous and discontented second-wife. Her companion was an older woman, evidently a servant.

His eyes returned to the hole in the door, but his ears continued to listen for the words of the women. The servant was speaking:

"How long, Tai-tai, must my Crimson Lotus submit to the vile attentions of this opium hawker? It should not be difficult—"

"It is more difficult than thou thinkest, mother of no sons."

"Will he not take my Peace Blossom—my Lotus—into his stinking hovel? Will he look upon your beauty in no place other than the teahouse?"

"He fears the serpent."

"The serpent?"

"Have I not told thee, daughter of an addled egg? He cherishes a creeping creature that he swears was once his wife in a former life. He fears the fangs of her jealousy."

"A serpent may be crushed by the heel—"

"That shall be thy task, then. Nay, find the way, and it shall be my heel, and mine the silver sycee that lies under the bricks of his kang."

"Find the way?"

"The secret of the knocks that gain admittance, O Half Moon of Wisdom—buy it from one of the slaves of the pipe that come here each day."

Allister heard no more, for there was of a sudden a deeper shadow, a more animate void, within the aperture of the door. He shook himself together, and arose, for he was conscious of the eye of Ssu Yin.

After a moment the door opened, and the opium seller stood forth. He was imperceptibly startled when Allister touched his sleeve, for his attention had been directed to the vanishing glint of embroidery that beckoned him toward the tea pavilion of a Thousand and Three Beatitudes.

There was no greeting from either, and there was no need of word or gesture. Allister's drug-lust uttered its own argument, and Ssu Yin bowed with the air both of acquiescence and of acknowledged obligation. He shouted backward into the passage behind the open door, and shuffling feet responded.

The door closed behind Allister's starved figure, and Ssu Yin, conscious of the street-crowd admiration that followed the unwonted gaiety of his attire, crossed a miasmatic lotus pool and entered the teahouse.

Allister was able to think more clearly when the stupor wore away, though mind and body were torn by a devastating revulsion. He lifted himself abruptly from the filthy bunk in which he lay, and the feeble, awkward movement upset a stand

upon which was his chandoo pipe, still nauseous with burnt opium. The effort left him suddenly faint, and with alarm he shuddered back into the bunk, closing fiery-lidded eyes.

"Can't be far from the end," he murmured to himself. "If I could only get away —if I could only get back to the States!"

This was the usual burst of remorse; it was like all the rest, a feeble protest against ill-directed destiny. He knew that, of his own effort, he never would get back to the States, away from the insidious East. He had tried that; he had worked until the money was in his hands, only to dive more steeply for a time toward the poppy fields of oblivion.

The consul-general had shipped him out on a transport, but he had gone only as far as Manila. The call of the drug had been too insistent. If the vessel only had been going straight East, without a stop, to the California coast, he might have made it.

He would make it! He would get the money once more—earn it, perhaps, but somehow he would get it, and go Home.

After a second effort, he succeeded in struggling to his feet, then in staggering out of the room into a larger one where there was the light of a horn lantern, and the comforting aroma of tea.

Ssu Yin sat gurgling contemplatively at his water-pipe, his eyes fixed upon two brilliant points of light in the half-shadows over the kang. He did not stir at Allister's approach, though he muttered an acknowledgment of the other's presence. Slowly Allister's bleared sight, following the direction of Ssu Yin's, comprehended the significance of those cold-blue darts of phosphorescence. They were set in a rigid, cylindrical, limb-like standard, projecting motionless from a pyramid of symmetrical coils. Often as he had beheld the serpent of Ssu Yin, on the poppy excursions that brought him so frequently to the sea cook's illicit den, he had never conquered a subtle fear, a rage for crushing, stamping out, obliterating. He had tried to explain this as an expression of man's traditional enmity toward the creeping creatures of the earth. Curiously, to witness the same fear in another was his sole antidote. In the presence of one who was more afraid than himself he could laugh down his own feeling, as had happened in the case of the second mate.

He sat down beside the brazier and helped himself to a gulp of tea. Ssu Yin, removing his eyes from their fixed stare, with a gesture that suggested the snapping of an invisible thread binding them to the eyes of the serpent, regarded Allister with an attentive but unfathomable look. Though his countenance expressed nothing, he was, Allister observed, in an unwonted mood. It was as if there had been a misunderstanding between himself and his reptilian familiar.

"Was there sweetness in the Elder Brother's honorable pipe of August Beginnings?" inquired Ssu Yin, bringing forth the foreign ear-trumpet that looked incongruous against its Oriental setting.

A grimace of pain was Allister's only answer.

"And was the sleep of this poor worm's wise and illustrious benefactor filled with the jasmine-incense of celestial happiness?"

"May your flesh be jellied and your bones splintered," was Allister's discourteous shot into the trumpet. "May your ancestors—"

"Harmless is the bluster of the paper tiger," interrupted Ssu Yin, with a playful malice. He went on in a more kindly vein: "A gem cannot be polished without friction, or a man perfected without adversity. The friction has been thine, Elder Brother, even as it is written; also the adversity; but a wise man also has said that the gods cannot help him who loses opportunities."

"Oh, drop the classics, Ssu Yin, and tell me what you're driving at!"

"The Elder Brother must set his feet unto new paths, or he will learn to walk soon in the Eternal Shades."

"I'm through, Ssu Yin. No more chandoo for me. Tomorrow—"

"The man who overestimates himself is like a rat falling into a scale and weighing himself."

Allister was stung by the contempt of his host's words, but he feared to retort. His sense of need came more fully upon him. His head swam, leadenly, and his tongue was thick.

"The pipe, Ssu Yin—only once more. And tomorrow—"

"Spawn of frog begets but frog; the wise

man does not give his cloak to the stealer of his coat; and to cure a habit by indulging it is to push a stone with an egg."

"No, Ssu Yin, I mean it this time—"

"Dragging the lake for the moon in the water, adding fuel to put out a fire," ran the relentless river of Ssu Yin's scornful proverbs.

Nevertheless, Ssu Yin arose and led the way to the sleeping room. He set forth within Allister's reach a bamboo pipe with black tassels and a mouthpiece of jade, lighted the lamp, and from a receptacle within his capacious sleeve jealously produced three miniature cylinders of amber-hued opium.

Cynically, Ssu Yin observed the trembling hands of the white man as he held one of the precious morsels over the flame, watched it sizzle, dissolve, evaporate. He waited until the operation thrice had been performed, each puff sending Allister nearer to the paradise of drugs, and stood gazing at the young man's emaciated features long after the squalid room had been translated, for Allister, into a pearly grotto through which he stepped forth on the winged feet of inexhaustible youth into a world of unimaginable color, transcendent beauty and unspeakable delight.

"A just debt—a just debt is mine," muttered Ssu Yin, solemnly, "and it is thus that I have paid. For this have I merited no less than the reproach of the gods."

WHEN Allister returned from the lotus fields of Elysium, his eyes were more fevered, his yellowed skin close drawn over cadaverous cheeks, and his weakness even greater than before.

This was the tomorrow of which he had spoken to Ssu Yin.

But what had any Oriental tomorrow to do with him? Here there were promises only of more lethal hours that did not relieve so much as they accented the deepening miseries leading toward an indubitable end.

Tomorrow—

He sprang up suddenly, the effort startling his heart into wild uncertainties. The recurrence of a feeling of resentment, long nourished, supported him.

"Ssu Yin, the superstitious dog—rich—preaching to me in nasty proverbs and feeding me this spawn of hell when he might be sending me home!"

The thought took possession of him, made him stealthy and steel-nerved. He would take the money—Ssu Yin owed it to him, the heathen ingrate; this time he would have a share in that hoard of sycee beneath the bricks of the kang.

He crept into the other room, fearing to find Ssu Yin there, a delay to his plot. But Ssu Yin was not in the room; the house seemed empty even of servants. The seller of opium probably was at his daily tryst. Allister thought, in the teahouse of the Beatitudes.

For the moment Allister had forgotten the serpent, and it was only in the act of turning his darting steps toward the kang that he remembered. In that instant a ray of sunlight revealed the still creature, eternally somnolent, as immobile as the stones against which its gelid coils were ranged.

The old fear seized him, and with it the rage to kill; but his weakness returned, and he was incapable of action. He remained as motionless as the snake, thinking of its reputed iniquities. The opium den of Ssu Yin was not without a reputation for crime. It had had its murders, strange deaths that baffled the native doctors of both "inside" and "outside" anatomy.

The serpent, he knew, was master of man in a duel of eyes, and Allister felt relief at a sound of interruption. Someone had entered the house. The shock loosened his limbs, and he crept back to his foul bunk, waiting for the philosophical gibes of Ssu Yin, sick with revulsion at thought of his intended theft.

His ears told him in a moment, however, that the wary step and the listening caution of the one who had entered, were not Ssu Yin's. Presently there were hurried movements, unwonted sounds, a breathless intenseness that took audible form, in the outer room. Stealthily, Allister moved nearer.

The figure of a woman was beneath the ray of sunlight now, cutting off its warning of the coiled spectre of dissolution. She stooped over the kang, lifting the bricks, laying them aside with a careless impatience. A cavity grew, and from it presently, with a sigh of gratification, she plucked a silver in-

got—followed it with others, until a mound of them, too heavy for her own strength, lay at her feet.

Allister watched her in amazement. Was she unaware of the snake? Or was she, like Ssu Yin, its master, immune to ophidian fear?

She stood up, turned toward Allister, as if at some psychic warning of his presence, and he recognized her as the woman of the temple yard—the Crimson Lotus, Ssu Yin's tea house siren.

Doubtless her apprehensions heightened her error, but in the half-light it must have been easy to mistake Allister's immobile figure for the darkly vengeful one of Ssu Yin.

She cried out, took an involuntary step backward, tripped upon a sycee ingot, and a bared arm, thrust outward to break her fall, met the serpent's fangs.

In the nine-tones sing-song of a Cantonese who is at peace with himself, Ssu Yin entered his hovel incanting a bar of that old song of Cathay, "The Millet's in Flower."

He paused at the door of his inner room, in the middle of a note, and allowed the details of the tableau to etch themselves upon his brain.

Across the kang lay his woman—his Crimson Lotus—inert, lifeless. Upon her still breast, its viridescence blending strangely with the soft tints of her silk tunic, was piled with deadly pyramid of the coiled serpent—flat, arrowy head drawn back awaiting the impulse to strike, glistening red tongue stirring with forked vibrations, and phosphorescent eyes blazing with fury.

Within reach of its fangs was crouched Allister, one hand touching, with a suggestion of pity, the face of the woman, the other, clasping a silver ingot, poised cataleptically in the midst of an intended blow. His was the arrested animation of carved marble, the impotent fascination of a bird obeying the hypnosis of the serpent's eye.

Slow rage filled Ssu Yin—a calm cruelty. Here lay his broken Lotus Bud; a thief, an accomplice, a wanton, or a viperous traitor to his heart's homage—what did it matter? And here was his "Elder Brother," his benefactor, the white man—dog, despoiler—who would have robbed him of all.

Well, a simple solution—the fangs of his serpent, slavering for their prey. . . .

But the poise of a hundred philosophical generations began to quiet his thick pulses—the restraints of a race that has schooled itself to play the game of life by meticulous rule. A debt was his—he must pay it.

Ssu Yin realized, suddenly, that an abrupt movement, the slightest translation of Allister's rigid pose into activity, would bring to him the darting caress of oblivion.

Cautiously, Ssu Yin approached, uttering a curious sound that always, until now, had brought an answering acquiescence into the eyes of the serpent. He came closer, at last laying his parchment-skinned hand upon the vibrant coil, seeking a grip that would keep him safe from a scratch of fangs.

But something was amiss with Ssu Yin's mastery over the snake. He recognized this in a thrill of terror at the moment when he knew it was forever too late. He would have explained, had there been time for such inquiry, that it was jealousy in the soul of the transmigrated woman who had been his wife—jealousy of the Crimson Lotus. This it was, he would have said, that animated the serpent's yellow needles of death.

The poison gripped him, but a sense of unfinished justice gave him strength while he battered the cringing reptile into an amorphous, hideous mass.

With Allister, dazed, half understanding, he still had the business of words. A courteous smile crackled the parchment of his face as he took from his sleeve an envelope and held it out to Allister.

"Three lives for two," he murmured, "and the debt is more than paid. May the August Elder Brother's voyage into the friendly bosom of the West be as pleasant as the repose of Buddha."

Allister's wondering fingers disclosed within the envelope a steamer ticket to Seattle. He put out a protesting hand, began self-accusing phrases, but the seller of opium was beyond argument. Ssu Yin was on his knees murmuring before the shelf of the gods:

"Unabashed, Great Ancestors—into the Vale of Longevity Ssu Yin walks without shame.

"I couldn't do anything about it; he had found the answer to interchangeable human parts."

Hand of Death

BY MARJORIE MURCH STANLEY

I CAN tell this story now . . . without hurting Tom.

First of all, you must understand that I loved him very much. Nothing that happened to him, or ever could have happened, would have changed that. Perhaps if I'd gotten to him in time, I could have made him understand. But that was the trouble from the beginning . . . I couldn't get to him.

Heading by Jon Arfstrom

We had been very close to each other for more than a year. We were going to be married as soon as he and his father, Professor Martin, finished one final experiment. And suddenly, Tom and I were like strangers. You might say it all began on a Friday night in October.

"Darling, darling," Tom whispered. "Just a few more weeks and we'll be together forever. Dad wants to get this one last experiment out of the way. The minute he can spare me from the lab, we'll be married."

"Tom, I hope it's soon. We've waited so long!"

We were walking through Clifton Park where we came as often as we could for our hurried meetings. Tom had so few spare moments. I knew better than to ask what the experiments were. Even Tom didn't know all the details, although he told me once they would revolutionize medicine.

He walked me back to my apartment, held me tightly and kissed me good night.

"Now don't forget Wednesday night," he warned me.

"As if I could," I laughed.

I went into my apartment alone and, not turning on the light, I went to the window and watched him walk down the dark street.

To all intents and purposes . . . I never really saw Tom again.

LATE Wednesday afternoon, I was ironing the skirt of my best black formal when the phone rang. Tom and I were planning a big evening out, our first real date in weeks. He had tickets to a new play and we were going to meet some friends for supper afterwards. After so many hurried meetings, quick lunches near his laboratory, short phone calls, a walk now and then, it was heaven to think I'd be with him all evening. I'd had a quick, almost curt, call from him Monday at the office, just to say he'd pick me up at seven-thirty on Wednesday. Other than that we'd had no contact since Friday night.

My nails were shiny, my hair in pin curls, and my heart very light as I answered the phone.

"Margaret? This is Paul."

"Yes, Paul. How are you?" My voice was warm. There are a lot of nice guys in the world, I thought, but Dr. Paul Holbrook is one of the best. He and Tom had been roommates in pre-med school. But while Paul had gone on with medicine, and taken his degree, Tom had elected to work with his father along a different line.

"Fine. Listen. Is Tom there with you?"

"No. I'm not expecting him until seven-thirty. Why?"

"Funny. Nobody answers at the laboratory. I thought someone was always there in the afternoon. Oh, well, it can wait."

"You sound funny, Paul. Is there something wrong?"

"Nothing, really. I saw Tom this morning, out near the lab. I was driving past, and I stopped. He was walking his dog."

I laughed. "That big mutt. Honestly, the housekeeper could just as well do it, but Tom's so crazy about Siegfried, you know . . ."

"It wasn't Siegfried. It was a little dachshund. The poor little thing was limping and Tom was talking to it like a mother. I kidded him about it and he told me to mind my own business."

"Why, Paul," I said slowly, "that doesn't sound like Tom. He doesn't have a dachshund. That is . . . well, there was one in the laboratory three or four weeks ago. Tom found him in the road one night with a leg so badly smashed it had to be amputated."

"This was a dachshund all right. Probably a different one. Even in school Tom was always picking up stray dogs. Oh, well, I was just taking a long chance on his being at your place, Margaret. I'll see you after the show tonight. Right?"

"That's right, Paul."

WE HUNG up. I went back to my ironing. As I look back on that time, just before the roof of my little world fell in, I don't believe I had even an inkling of what was ahead. I was excited about that evening, eager to have a good time, and odd facts like a closed laboratory, a limping dachshund and Tom's being rude to his best friend, just didn't tie together. I didn't go to the laboratory often. Tom's father was a queer sort—a cheerful, gay, whistling little man given to sudden silences and fits

of brooding. The two of them lived in an apartment over their laboratory in the quieter section of town, almost on the outskirts. A housekeeper, a Mrs. Vernon, took care of them. The place was really off the main road, their street going on for a block or two and then meandering off into a dirt road into the countryside. It was so different from my tiny apartment, right in the center of town.

But, as I said, on that particular Wednesday afternoon, I don't believe I gave a thought to anything except making myself as pretty as possible for Tom.

Tom was late. Seven-thirty came and went. At eight-fifteen I decided to phone his apartment. At that moment, I heard a loud, almost belligerent pounding on the door. It didn't sound like Tom, but when I opened the door, there he was. He had a peculiar look on his face . . . vague . . . or perhaps puzzled is a better word. He mumbled an apology as he came in. He didn't kiss me.

"I don't mind your being late, darling, but is something wrong?" I asked hesitantly.

"No." He swung to face me. "What makes you say that? What could be wrong?"

"Nothing. I didn't mean anything. I guess, I . . . I'm just a little impatient to get going."

I thought he might say something nice about my looks. My black dress fitted me perfectly. My light brown hair was smooth and shining from the rinse I'd given it. And while I'll never be beautiful, Tom always said he liked green eyes and a turned up nose. But he didn't say anything. He just stood there in his bulky topcoat, his brown eyes with a bewildered look in them . . . and his dark hair a little too long.

It was a warm evening for this late in the summer, but Tom didn't seem to notice, so after a moment, I took my own coat from the closet and we left.

I CAN'T remember much of the play. Tom didn't hold my hand. In fact he seemed to be trying not to touch me at all. During intermission he sat staring straight ahead, with his coat folded in his lap so that people had to clamber over us on their way to the lobby.

When the play was over, we took a cab to the supper club.

"Hi, kids," I greeted Paul and his date, Bettina. Paul introduced another couple at the table, as Tom and I sat down.

"We're a little ahead of you," Bettina told us seriously, setting her glass down carefully in front of her.

"Not for long," Tom assured her, signalling the waiter.

It was then I noticed Tom was wearing an old suit from his college days. It brought back forcibly to me, how terribly thin and run down looking he was. In college, of course, he'd gotten a bit too heavy—he was on the football team—but really this old suit hung like a sack on him.

Tom took his first drink at a gulp, and the second and third. Paul and I exchanged glances. Tom had a poor head for liquor and seldom drank at all. Paul started to apologize for the episode with the dachshund, but Tom brushed his words aside . . . and went on talking to Bettina. He hadn't paid the slightest attention to me since leaving the theatre.

In another hour, Tom was so drunk he could hardly stand. We started to leave. The other man and Paul tried to get Tom to his feet without creating a disturbance. And yet the oddest thing happened. When Paul tried to put his arm around Tom, Tom suddenly gave a lunge, got to his feet, and was out of the door before we could do anything. When we reached the street, Tom was just driving away in a cab.

We all followed in Paul's car, but we lost him in traffic. We drove out to the laboratory. It was locked and there was no light inside, although we could hear dogs barking somewhere toward the back. Paul took me home, and I cried myself to sleep.

For three days, Paul and I tried to get in touch with Tom. If he heard our phone calls, he didn't answer. If he and the professor were at the laboratory, they paid no attention to our ringing and knocking at the door. Where Mrs. Vernon was I don't know, but we always heard the dogs.

I went to work every day, I'm secretary to the head of a chemical firm, but I had a hard time keeping my mind on my job. When I quit work at noon on Saturday, I

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hurried back to the apartment. No sooner had I stepped in the door when the phone rang.

"Thought I'd catch you, Margaret." Paul's voice came thinly over the wire. "Look, I've got some bad news. No . . . no . . . " I had gasped audibly. "No . . . it's not Tom. It's his father . . . the professor. He's been strangled."

My knees gave way and I sank into a chair. "Strangled? But who . . . who could have done such a thing . . . Why?"

"Nobody knows. Tom found him and notified the police. It must have happened about six this morning, but Tom didn't find him until about eight. The professor was on the laboratory floor."

"How . . . how horrible," I breathed. "Where's Tom now? Can I see him? He must be sick over this."

"He'll be at the inquest this afternoon. Mrs. Vernon is taking care of him. She's the one who called me. The inquest will be held at the coroner's office at four o'clock. You could see Tom there. Do you want me to pick you up?"

"Yes. Yes. I'll be ready. Oh, Paul, Professor Martin was such a little . . . inoffensive man. Who'd want to hurt him?"

And that was the question they tried to find the answer to at the inquest.

TO THE strangers who didn't know Tom, I suppose his actions seemed normal. He sat in a corner of the room with his head in his hand and his elbows on his knees. He was wearing the long loose laboratory coat as he habitually did. He answered everything they asked him in an especially loud voice. To me, it seemed to hold suppressed fury. He never once met my eyes. Instead he asked why all the "extra people" were there.

Someone asked him if we weren't friends of his. He said we were, but did we need to get mixed up in this.

Of course they told him the hearing was open, that anyone could come. At first his coldness puzzled me . . . then I wanted to cry. Paul squeezed my hand sympathetically and that helped me keep the tears back.

Tom's story was perfectly straightforward and the housekeeper corroborated it. He

awakened at eight o'clock, shaved, dressed and went downstairs as he always did. He said the professor often spent the night on the cot in the laboratory and had done so the night he was killed. No, the professor hadn't had any visitors. In fact the last person to visit them had been Paul and that was nearly three weeks before.

The housekeeper said she lived in except on Saturday and Sunday nights when she stayed overnight with a married daughter. She awakened at seven-thirty as usual, and started breakfast in the kitchen. She hadn't heard anything in the night.

"Though I can't be saying as everything was perfectly normal, this past month or two. Tom and his pa were getting mysterious about their work. They even went so far as to lock the laboratory doors, something they've never done in the twelve years I've been caring for them. And they said I wasn't to answer the door, no matter who was there, nor the telephone either." Old Mrs. Vernon seemed put out, but when they questioned her further, she couldn't say exactly why things seemed "mysterious."

Tom admitted they'd been extra careful about their work. "My father was on the verge of a very important discovery. Even I didn't know just what it was. Only that it would be the means of stopping a great deal of the suffering of injured animals. That's about all I can say."

Did his father have any enemies?

Tom's eyes seemed to be seeing things that we couldn't. "None that I know of. You might even say he had no friends. Certainly since my mother died twelve years ago, he went nowhere. And we never entertained. The only people who came to the lab were friends of mine and they came very infrequently."

AS TOM spoke, his words sounded rational and calm, but I knew him. I knew that he was tense and uncertain, that he could hardly contain his impatience at being there, and that he was trying desperately to hold back his nervousness.

The police in charge said that the laboratory had been thoroughly checked for fingerprints. One large thumb print found on the laboratory table, which did not match those of the professor, Tom, or the housekeeper, had been forwarded to Washington for possible identification. I was watching Tom during these remarks and it seemed to me that his face took on a sickly look, as though someone had dealt him a blow in the pit of his stomach.

There seemed to be nothing more to discuss, and after Paul and I had answered a routine question or two, the coroner gave his verdict as death by strangulation caused by a person or persons unknown. And we were free to go.

I started towards Tom, but he got up and walked out the door without looking at me. And I spent another night crying myself to sleep.

I spent most of Sunday trying to get Tom on the 'phone, but no one answered. It was about eight o'clock when Paul 'phoned me.

"The police have identified the fingerprint. It belongs to a Gringo Mallard—ex-fighter, ex-convict. He got sent up once for manslaughter, by strangling!"

"Then that's the answer!" I cried. "Oh, Paul . . . let's go out to see Tom. Let's try again. Maybe we can get him to sell the house . . . turn the lab over to someone else . . . maybe . . ."

"Margaret, wait." Paul's voice cut in. "You didn't let me finish. The D. A. found out something else. Gringo Mallard is dead. He was killed in a brawl in a town two counties away. He was killed a week before the professor was strangled."

"Then . . . then . . . what does it mean? How could his fingerprints be on the lab table? Is there some mistake?"

"That's what the D. A. wants to know. Margaret, Tom knows something he isn't telling anyone. That's why he's acting so strangely. You know, it occurred to me last night; how could a stranger get near to that house without those dogs setting up a racket? And yet both Tom and Mrs. Vernon must have slept right through the murder. I think Tom is shielding someone."

"But who? Who would he possibly want to shield?"

"I don't know. The D. A. will be after him the first thing in the morning. We've got to get out there tonight, and try to talk

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to him. I'm going to break my way into the laboratory, if necessary. Do you want to come?"

IT WAS late in the evening when we drove up to Tom's place. It had been a raw, dull day. Summer was really over and we'd been having a spell of wet weather. Leaves were dropping and out on the lonely section where Tom lived, they had blown into soggy heaps. The place seemed more desolate than ever.

Paul rang the bell, then pounded on the door. We waited. The dogs in the kennels started barking.

"If he's not in there, where could he be?" I could hear the 'phone ringing in the back somewhere, and it rang and rang before it stopped.

"I guess Mrs. Vernon isn't back yet. I'm going in anyway, if I can make it." Paul started to poke around the doorway, then the window. Finally he told me to watch out. He stood at one side and smashed in a window with a stone. He did it carefully and thoroughly until he could reach in and turn the lock. Then he stepped inside and pulled up the frame. After a moment, he helped me through.

We were in the laboratory proper. We switched on a light. It was a weak one, and at first sight, the lab looked as it had on the few occasions I'd visited Professor Martin. I could almost see the round, pink face and stocky figure bending over his endless books or working at his strange assortment of test tubes. I shuddered and looked about me quickly. Where had they found his body? Here? I moved from the place where I was standing. The light seemed to dim even more. I stepped near a spot that was dark. Had it once been blood? I moved again. Then I remembered . . . there wouldn't have been blood, of course, at least not the professor's. He'd been strangled. Strangled! What a ghastly feeling that must be.

I was working myself to a fine state of hysteria, but I was ashamed to let Paul know my feelings. He was on the other side of the room, flipping through some ledgers, when a low voice from behind me, almost in my ear said:

"What do you want?"

I screamed before I could stop myself, although almost at the same instant I knew it was Tom.

He just stood there looking at the two of us, at Paul, with a stack of papers in his hand, and at me with my hands over my mouth.

"I said—what do you want?" Tom came toward us. Involuntarily I backed toward Paul. As Tom came under the light, I saw that he was muddy almost to his knees.

"Tom," I faltered, "we just had to see you."

"Why?" Tom cut in, almost with a snarl. I looked at him and he was an utter stranger. There was nothing left of the man I had known . . . the friendly, sweet person who had loved me.

"You needn't talk like that." Paul's voice was brisk with a false heartiness. "We're your friends. We want to talk to you. Something has come up that you've got to know about."

TOM looked from our faces to the broken window. When he saw the papers in Paul's hand, he made an angry snatch at them, crossing the room in a frenzy. He stopped mid-action, and slowly slumped down in a chair.

I sat down opposite him. Paul pulled up a lab stool, and leaning forward, he told Tom about Gringo Mallard.

"So you see . . . there must be a mistake somewhere, Tom. Gringo couldn't have killed your father. He'd been dead for nearly a week."

Tom didn't look surprised. He was staring at Paul in an odd sort of way, I could say . . . wistfully. Then he said in a flat unemotional voice, "Yes, I know."

"You . . . know . . ." I stammered. "How do you know Gringo was dead? The police only found it out an hour ago."

"I know because I saw him a few minutes ago. He's dead all right." Tom laughed—the eeriest sound I ever heard. "Say, how would you two like to hear a story?" Tom sat up straight with a jerk. "Sure. I'll tell it to you and then it won't be a secret any more . . . I won't have to hide any more . . . I won't be alone any more."

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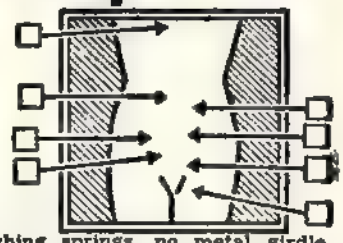

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"What have you got to tell us. We're our friends. Tell us anything. We'll listen," Paul urged him on.

"Oh, sure. You'll listen." Tom pitched his voice so low that I strained forward to catch the words.

It was pitch black outside now . . . no light came through the broken window . . . and the one small bulb in the ceiling seemed very small. It threw shadows on all of us . . . and against the walls.

"You'll listen, and you won't believe me. You won't believe a word I say until . . ."

"Start from the beginning," I begged.

"The beginning? There isn't any beginning. I'm going to start at the end. Do you know where I've been?" He waved a finger impishly under our noses. "Don't guess. You wouldn't be right. I've been pushing a man back into his grave."

Paul's eye caught mine, and the same thought must have hit us both at once. *Humor him. He's out of his mind.*

"That's why I'm muddy. I went out into the swamps . . . down the road. All this rain, I thought it might wash him out and it had. There Gringo was . . . floating in the swamp . . . ugly and sodden and dead." Tom giggled. "I had to make sure. I pushed him back in the ground. Yes, everything that was out there was dead."

I was afraid to speak. Tom's eyes stared straight ahead. He didn't see us. "But he killed my father. He killed him. I didn't do it. They can't blame me."

AFTER a long moment, Tom went on in a more normal manner. "My father was a wonderful man, and he had a wonderful idea. For a while it worked. It's all there in the ledgers. You can read it . . . every little experiment. He started small. He wanted it kept a secret. He wanted to be absolutely sure. He had to prove it over and over to himself that he was right. I begged him to let the medical profession know, before someone else came up with the same idea, and got the glory, but he wouldn't listen. He started being away for hours at a time."

Tom got to his feet restlessly. He started to pace back and forth . . . so that his shadows swung from one wall to the other. "And then one afternoon . . . it was a few days before the night we went to the theatre . . . it happened. I guess my father had been planning it a long time. He was having one of his sullen moods. We quarreled about giving out the secret. For days he'd acted strangely. This day he was half-dazed from lack of sleep . . . he'd been out all night. I heard funny noises early in the morning. I knew it was too early for the housekeeper to be coming downstairs. I went down to see what was going on, and I saw my father coming out of the

laboratory. He locked the door behind him, and he wouldn't let me in the room all day. Finally I tried to force in the door and my father came up behind me. I felt him jab me with a needle. I swung on him, and that's the last I remember until I woke up on the lab table."

Tom looked at the table in front of him, then covered his face with his hands and sat down. He was shaking, almost sobbing. Paul opened one of the cabinets and poured Tom a stiff drink.

"There's no way of telling you how I felt. I had the feeling that time had passed . . . hours. I felt light-headed; but not sick. I didn't hurt anywhere, and for a little while I didn't move. I was fully conscious, but I kept my eyes closed, trying to figure out why my father had given me a knock-out dose of whatever it was. The sheet was pulled up to my chin, my arms were crossed over my chest. Finally, I opened my eyes. My father was standing beside me.

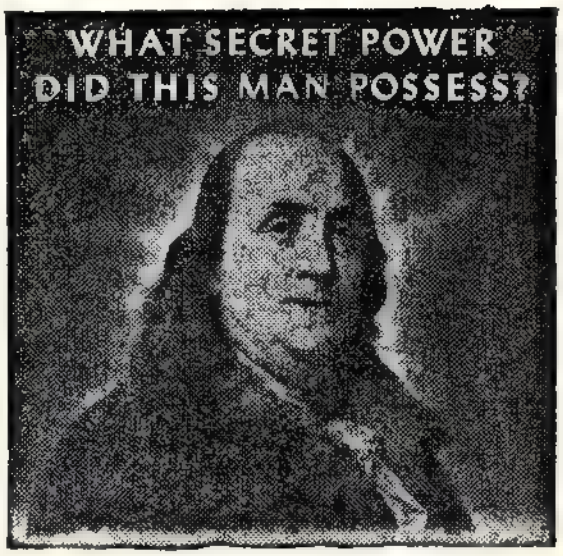
"It worked," he told me, coming around so that we faced each other. "It worked. Now we can tell them. I've proved it finally."

Tom shifted to the edge of his chair. His voice dropped to a hoarse whisper. I could feel the hair prickling the back of my neck. Paul moved uneasily.

"And then my father told me to get up . . . to get up and walk around . . . that I was perfectly all right . . . that there wouldn't be any reaction." Tom stopped. The silence was heavy in the laboratory.

"Go on . . . go on . . ." Paul told him, harshly. "Get to the point."

Tom sprang to his feet. "All right! All right! Here's the point!" Tom grabbed me by the arm, and started pulling me toward the hall. Paul jumped to my side, and Tom shoved us both along. "There . . ." Tom pointed to the hallway. "See that mirror . . . I smashed it. I smashed the one upstairs. I did it in a drunken rage . . . when I saw what had happened to me. Look!" Tom turned back to the laboratory. He snatched off his coat . . . and flung it to the floor. Then he started ripping at his shirt. His body was bound tightly with strips of cloth. He tore at the knots. Finally he hacked at it with a scalpel. And then . . . as though



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released under terrific pressure . . . a heavy, hairy . . . twisting arm came into sight . . . not Tom's arm . . . but attached to him . . . struggling and squirming . . . throwing a thousand spidery shadows on the walls.

I SCREAMED and screamed . . . while Tom held the wiggling horror with both his arms . . . laughing at my terror . . . at Paul's stunned amazement . . . shrieking all the while . . . "See . . . see . . . this is why I got drunk . . . why I smashed the mirrors. My father did this to me. I was his best experiment . . . a real freak. If your dog got a smashed leg . . . he'd graft on a new one. If some punk lost an ear in a fight . . . he'd graft on a new one . . . and if you were all in one piece . . . maybe you'd like an extra arm . . . everybody can use another arm . . . like this . . . like mine . . . have another arm . . . just for the laughs." And Tom's choked laughter went on and on . . . over my screams . . . until the room swirled about me, and I lost consciousness.

I don't know how much later it was when I came to. I was on a sofa in Tom's apartment over the laboratory. Paul was sitting by me, holding ammonia under my nose.

"Margaret! Wake up! Wake up! I can't leave you alone unless you wake up."

I fought my way back to consciousness.

"Where is he?" I whispered.

"He's in the bedroom. No . . . no . . . lie down. It's all right. You won't have to see him again."

"How did you . . . ?"

"I knocked him out. Then I bound up the arm again." I shuddered at Paul's words, but he kept a firm grip on my hands so that I couldn't sit up. "He's perfectly rational, although he's terribly depressed."

"Paul, I've got to go to him. You must let me. I can stand it now. Now that I've seen . . ."

"It's no place for a woman . . . with a maniac!"

"You mustn't say that about Tom. I . . . I love him . . ." The words came hard, yet even as I said them . . . the old tenderness swept over me. I had loved Tom too long and waited for him too long, not to have some of that feeling still alive no matter what. "Paul, what can we do for him. I

don't care what he's like . . . this isn't the real Tom. He's just had too much of horror and disillusionment about his father . . . and . . ."

"There's just one thing to do and I'm going to try it, if he'll let me."

I sat up and this time Paul let me. "I'm not afraid of him, Paul . . . Let me see him again."

We went slowly into the bedroom. There was nothing violent looking about Tom. He was on the bed, with a blanket over him. His face was clean now, and the hair smoothed down. We sat down, one of us on either side of the bed, and this time Tom told the rest of his story in a flat, passionless voice, oddly out of focus with the violence of his words.

"Don't be afraid of me, Margaret. I didn't want you to know about this . . . ever. I wanted to kill myself. I wouldn't even answer the 'phone because it might be you, and I think I would have broken down, just talking to you. It takes a brave man to kill himself, and I'm not brave. I guess my father knew that. It's awful to think he'd do that to me, his own son . . . just to prove himself right. I suppose you've guessed the rest. The night of the theatre, I nearly went crazy. No matter what I put on, or how tightly I strapped the arm, it still showed. I only wanted to hide myself, along with the other animals. We were all freaks together. That's why I was so nervous when you caught me walking the dachshund that morning, Paul."

Paul stretched out his hand and patted Tom's shoulder . . . "I'm sorry about that . . . but it's OK now . . . forget it."

TOM went on. "But then I got a terrific yearning to see you, Margaret . . . and other people, normal people. I found my old college suit, and that covered the bump if I strapped the arm straight down my side. Oh, I'd tried everything, but father had done his work well . . . every muscle, every cord . . . I could feel it as though the arm were my own, but I didn't have any control over it. Even strapped as it was . . . it writhed. I begged my father . . . I pleaded with him to take it off. And he promised he would . . . if I'd wait just a little while

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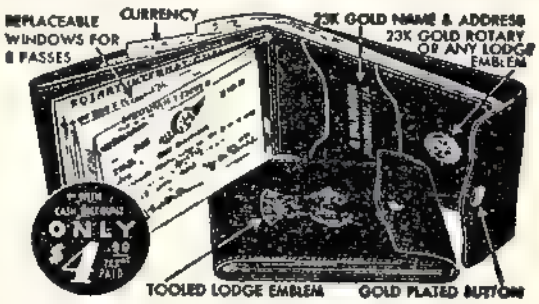

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. . . a week . . . a few days . . . so he could take notes. I promised. I couldn't do anything about it myself. And it was true. There was no reaction at all. He had found the answer to interchangeable human parts."

Tom shook his head slowly. "Perhaps those words occurred to my father . . . Perhaps that's what gave him the idea of spare parts. That idea should be funny, somehow. Anyway, you know I got drunk the night of the theatre. I found I couldn't face you after all, Margaret. When I got home in the cab, my father was waiting for me. He took notes, reams of notes . . . and my reactions to everything. When I finally sobered up we . . . we buried what was left of Gringo. Somehow, through some method he never revealed, he got the body of the man while it was still warm and brought it home, that night when he stayed out. It's all in the records, I suppose."

Tom stopped.

"Paul . . . if . . . if . . . I don't get through this thing in one piece . . . you take the records . . . take everything. There's a will . . . you won't have any trouble."

Paul reassured him. "That's nonsense . . . everything is settled. I'll amputate the arm. We'll bury it . . . or burn it . . . and no one on earth will ever know."

Tom shook his head. "They'll find Gringo. Or somebody will start putting two and two together. There will be people out here . . . . crowds, maybe. They'll find him." His voice dropped eerily again. "I think Gringo wants to be found. He wants the rest of himself. And the arm . . . the arm . . . it keeps struggling."

"Stop that, Tom. That's just what you mustn't think about. Can you tell us how it happened . . . about the Professor?"

"So simple. I'd gotten up early on Saturday morning, so my father could help me take a bath. Someone had to hold the arm, you see. We had to do it while Mrs. Vernon was still asleep. The arm was quiet that morning, but you never could be sure. When I'd bathed, I went back to the lab, and my father was getting ready to strap it down, when it . . . just . . . reached out for his throat. Father pulled at the arm . . . and I tried to break away. But the thing's in such a position . . . not really below my

arm, but a little towards the back, that I couldn't get into a good position to hold it. When I broke loose, Father was dead. Then . . . then the arm quieted down, and I strapped it myself. Then I locked up all the ledgers and went back upstairs until my usual time for getting up. Then I went down and pretended to discover him, and I called the police."

"Tom . . . please listen to Paul," I said. "It's a chance worth taking. If this whole thing gets out, it might mean a long trial. You'll never live it down."

Paul stood up. "It's decided. I'm going to do it. Margaret, you'll have to help. We can do it here; we have everything we need. We'll do it tonight. There's no need to wait."

Tom watched us both. He must have seen the look Paul gave me, but he allowed himself to be persuaded. Paul said he should sleep a little while, and we'd wake him when everything was ready. Paul wanted to read everything Professor Martin had written on the case.

I waited quietly by Tom's side until he was asleep. I wasn't afraid, not even re-

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pulsed by what lay under the covers, I suppose I was just numb. I prayed that whatever reaction was coming to me would wait until the operation was over.

Finally I went downstairs to Paul and we made what preparations were necessary. He finished reading the ledgers, shaking his head in admiration and incredulity. We went into the cellar to look at the furnace. Paul decided against burning the arm. We would take it down the road to the woods and bury it before it grew light.

We each had a drink, and then arranged the table for operating, and sterilized the instruments. Then I went up to awaken Tom while Paul scrubbed his hands. Never, to my dying day, will I ever walk up a flight of stairs and open a bedroom door again, without the full horror of this moment returning to me.

STATEMENT REQUIRED BY THE ACT OF AUGUST 24, 1912, AS AMENDED BY THE ACTS OF MARCH 3, 1933, and JULY 2, 1946 (Title 39, United States Code, Section 233) showing the ownership, management, and circulation of WEIRD TALES, published bi-monthly at New York, N. Y., for October 1, 1952.

1. The names and addresses of the publisher, editor, managing editor, and business managers are:

Publisher, Short Stories, Inc.,
9 Rockefeller Plaza, New York 20, N. Y.

Editor, D. McIlwraith,
9 Rockefeller Plaza, New York 20, N. Y.

Managing editor, None.

Business manager, William J. Delaney,
9 Rockefeller Plaza, New York 20, N. Y.

2. The owner is: (If owned by a corporation, its name and address must be stated and also immediately thereunder the names and addresses of stockholders owning or holding 1 percent or more of total amount of stock. If not owned by a corporation, the names and addresses of the individual owners must be given. If owned by a partnership or other unincorporated firm, its name and address, as well as that of each individual member, must be given.)

Short Stories, Inc.,
9 Rockefeller Plaza, New York 20, N. Y.

W. J. Delaney,
9 Rockefeller Plaza, New York 20, N. Y.

3. The known bondholders, mortgagees, and other security holders owning or holding 1 percent or more of total amount of bonds, mortgages, or other securities are: (If there are non, so state.) None.

4. Paragraphs 2 and 3 include, in cases where the stockholder or security holder appears upon the books of the company as trustee or in any other fiduciary relation, the name of the person or corporation for whom such trustee is acting; also the statements in the two paragraphs show the affiant's full knowledge and belief as to the circumstances and conditions under which stockholders and security holders who do not appear upon the books of the company as trustees, hold stock and securities in a capacity other than that of a bona fide owner.

WILLIAM J. DELANEY, President

Sworn to and subscribed before me this 6th day of October, 1952.
(Seal)

WILLIAM G. ELLIOTT
Notary Public, State of New York. No. 03-6174500, qualified in Bronx County, Certs. filed with Bronx and N. Y. Co Clks. County Clerks and Registers.
(My commission expires March 30, 1954.)

TOM lay as we had left him. There had been no struggle. His eyes were wide and blank; his face a ghastly shade of blue. The arm . . . the big, hairy, dark arm had him by the throat. His own arms were by his side. He held the knife with which he had cut the straps. This time I did not scream. I looked at him until the picture was printed on my mind forever, and then I didn't remember anything for a long time.

So, as I said in the beginning, I can tell this story without hurting Tom. If I could have reached his mind . . . made him know I loved him no matter what . . . perhaps he would have called to us at last.

When my terrible weeks of blackout and illness were over, Paul was my only security. I knew he loved me, and so we were married. It was true . . . what Tom had said. Everything was left to Paul to carry on as he saw fit. The whole story came out in every gruesome detail, and like everything of that nature, rapidly became yesterday's news. I began to forget. And yet, sometimes, just lately, I've been wondering if it is all over for me.

Paul and I were very close for a while after our marriage. What we had gone through together seemed a very strong tie. Recently Paul has spent less time at the hospital and in his office, and more time out at Tom's old laboratory. He's made quite a pet of Tom's little dachshund. Every once in a while I see him looking at me in a strange sort of way. Somehow, I don't feel so close to Paul any more.

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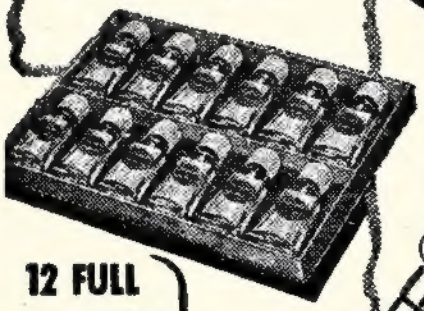

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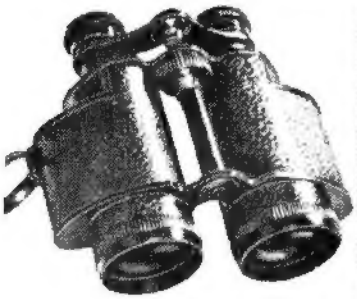

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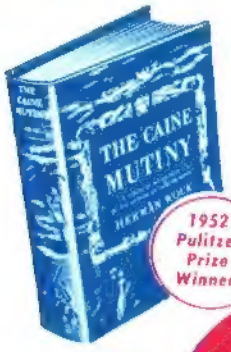

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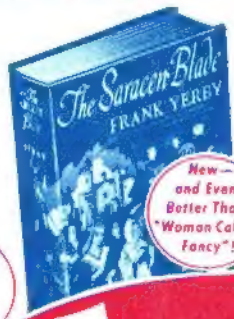

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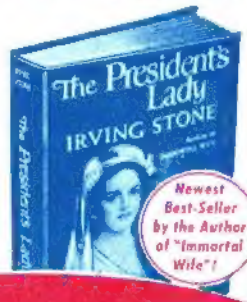

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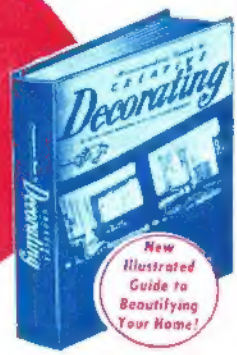

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